Presented to
United
Theological Seminary
Library
Dayton, Ohio

by
Mrs. Leona Doescher
In memory of
Dr. A.H.Doescher

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/snowdenssundaysc0000jame_y2x5

SNOWDEN'S
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

By

JAMES H. SNOWDEN

The Basal Beliefs of Christianity.
The World a Spiritual System.
Can We Believe in Immortality?
The Coming of the Lord.
Is the World Growing Better?
The Personality of God.
A Wonderful Night.
A Wonderful Morning.
Scenes and Sayings in the Life of Christ.
A Summer Across the Sea.
The Psychology of Religion.
The Truth About Christian Science.
The Truth About Mormonism.
The Meaning of Education.
The Attractions of the Ministry.
The City of Twelve Gates.
Jesus as Judged by His Enemies.
The Making and Meaning of the New Testament.
Immortality in the Light of Modern Knowledge.
Old Faith and New Knowledge.
Sunday School Lessons, Eight Annual Vols.

SNOWDEN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS

EVANGELICAL AND UNSECTARIAN
OF THE INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS, IMPROVED
UNIFORM SERIES: COURSE FOR

1929

BY
JAMES H. SNOWDEN

LIBRARY OF
United Theological Seminary
BV
1560
.S6
1929
46.318

EIGHTH
ANNUAL VOLUME

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1928

All rights reserved

Copyright, 1928,
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Set up and electrotyped.
Published August, 1928.

SET UP AND ELECTROTYPED BY T. MOREY & SON

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

He Opened the Book

Opening a book is one of the most significant things we ever do; for a book is the most wonderful thing in the world, however familiar it has become. All our magic wonders pale into insignificance in comparison with a book. A book is a door into the past and into all the accumulated wisdom of the world. We open a book and we are ushered into all the many-storied, treasure-crowded halls of history. We open a book and we are in a temple more stately and magnificent than any medieval cathedral, or Greek Parthenon, or mighty Egyptian pyramid. We open a book and we stand in the Middle Ages amidst its chivalry and clash of arms and dawning new day. We open a book and we are in Athens and hear Socrates ask bothersome questions and listen to the eloquence of Demosthenes. We open a book and the mounds of Babylon rise into a vast civilization and the Roman Empire uprears itself around the horizon into majestic grandeur and then declines and falls into ruins with a mighty crash. Jesus opened a book and read out of it the text of his first recorded sermon. And what a Book it was he opened! It has all the magic powers of a book with some supernatural qualities added to it. God breathed into this Book and blew his music through it. The Hebrews were gifted with religious genius, spiritual sensitivity, as were the Greeks with a sense of art and beauty and the Romans with power. Moses here inscribed his laws on pages more imperishable than tablets of stone. David embalmed in it his songs, Job set upon its stage his sublime drama of providence, and Isaiah and the prophets here let us see through their eyes as they preached their tremendous sermons and unrolled their splendid visions of the future. We have now added to the Book the part Jesus did not have that completes the Old with all the wonderful wealth and wisdom of the New. We continue to follow him as we open the Book and then we do not walk in darkness but have the light of life. May we receive the light and walk in it as we now proceed to open the Book.

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BOOKS THAT TEACHERS SHOULD OWN

THE MODERN READER'S BIBLE

By Richard G. Moulton

The Macmillan Company

One volume, cloth, complete text, 1738 pages, including full introductory essays to each book of the Bible, $3.50

This well-known book is simply the Bible presented in a modern literary form. It is not chopped up into bits of verses but is printed in paragraphs like any other book, and prose appears as prose, and poetry as poetry. The book simply gives the Bible a fair chance and lets it tell its own eloquent story as it cannot do when cut to pieces in the old form. The reading of one of the books of the Bible, as one of the Gospels, straight through in this volume gives one a new sense of its vividness and vitality.

THE ONE VOLUME BIBLE COMMENTARY

By Rev. J. R. Dummflow

The Macmillan Company, $3.00

This book of 1250 pages compresses between its covers a remarkable amount of scholarly information about the Bible, its books and authorship and background, together with brief comments on important and difficult passages and verses. It has been tried out and given satisfaction to all kinds of readers. Sunday school teachers who do not have the time and training to use commentaries of technical scholarship will find this coming to their help in practical ways at most points.

THE MAKING AND MEANING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: ITS BACKGROUND, BOOKS AND BIOGRAPHIES

By James H. Snowden

The Macmillan Company, $1.50

This book tells how the New Testament was made and what it means. It sketches the Hebrew, Greek and Roman background out of which it grew, briefly explains each book in it, outlines the life of Jesus and of Paul, and brings it all home to our business and bosoms with illuminating interpretation and application. It shows us what a surprisingly modern book the New Testament is and makes good for it the claim and distinction that it is the most interesting as it is incomparably the most valuable book in the world.

PREFACE

These lesson expositions follow the subjects suggested by the International Lesson Committee for adults and young people and the intermediate and senior grades. The treatment can be adapted by the teacher to all grades down through the junior and primary. The Bible text used in this volume is that adopted by the International Lesson Committee, the American Standard Edition, which as a more accurate translation serves in itself as a textual commentary in many points. The use of this copyright text has been specially granted for this volume by Thomas Nelson and Sons, its authorized publishers.

LIST OF LESSONS FOR 1929

FIRST QUARTER

Some Great Christian Teachings

Lesson		Page
I.	Jan. 6. Our Heavenly Father. Matthew 6:24–34	1
II.	Jan. 13. Sin. I John 1:5–10; 2:1–6	9
III.	Jan. 20. Christ the Saviour. Luke 15:3–7; Romans 5:6–11	16
IV.	Jan. 27. The Holy Spirit. John 16:7–11; Romans 8:12–17, 26–27	23
V.	Feb. 3. The Holy Scriptures. Psalm 19:7–14; II Timothy 3:14–17	30
VI.	Feb. 10. Repentance and Faith. Acts 2:32–39; Luke 15:11–24	38
VII.	Feb. 17. Prayer. Matthew 6:5–13; Luke 18:9–14; I John 5:14–15	46
VIII.	Feb. 24. Christian Growth. John 1:40–42; Matthew 16:15–18; John 21:15–19; II Peter 3:18	54
IX.	Mar. 3. The Christian Church. Mark 4:26–32; Ephesians 1:22–23; 4:4–6, 11–16	62
X.	Mar. 10. Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Matthew 28:19–20; I Corinthians 11:23–29	70
XI.	Mar. 17. The Christian Sabbath. Exodus 20:8–11; Matthew 12:1–8; John 20:19; Revelation 1:10	78
XII.	Mar. 24. Stewardship and Missions. Acts 1:6–8; II Corinthians 8:1–9	86
XIII.	Mar. 31. The Future Life. Luke 24:1–12; John 14:1–6	94

SECOND QUARTER

Prophetic Teaching and Leadership of Judah from Isaiah to the Exile

(First Half of a Six Months' Course)

I.	Apr. 7. The Ministry of Isaiah. Isaiah 6:1–8; 20:1–2; 38:1–5	103

Lesson		Page
II.	Apr. 14. Hezekiah Leads His People Back to God. II Chronicles 30:1–9, 25–27	111
III.	Apr. 21. Comfort for God's People. Isaiah 40:1–11	118
IV.	Apr. 28. The Suffering Servant of Jehovah. Isaiah 53:1–12	125
V.	May 5. What Hilkiah Found in the Temple. II Chronicles 34:14–16, 29–33	132
VI.	May 12. The Early Ministry of Jeremiah. Jeremiah 1:1–10; 26:8–15	139
VII.	May 19. Jeremiah Calls to Obedience. Jeremiah 7:1–11, 21–23	147
VIII.	May 26. God's Law in the Heart. Jeremiah 31:29–34; John 1:17–18	154
IX.	June 2. Later Experiences of Jeremiah. Jeremiah 38:4–13	161
X.	June 9. The Story of the Rechabites. Jeremiah 35:5–11	168
XI.	June 16. Judah Taken Captive. II Kings 25:1–12	175
XII.	June 23. A Psalm of Praise. Psalm 103:1–13	182
XIII.	June 30. Review: Prophets and Kings of Judah's Decline	189

THIRD QUARTER

The Exile and the Restoration

(Second Half of a Six Months' Course)

I.	July 7. The Story of Ezekiel. Ezekiel 3:4–11; 24:15–18	197
II.	July 14. Ezekiel Teaches Personal Responsibility. Ezekiel 33:7–16	204
III.	July 21. Ezekiel's Vision of Hope. Ezekiel 47:1–9	211
IV.	July 28. The Story of Daniel. Daniel 1:1–4, 19–20; 2:17–24	219
V.	Aug. 4. Belshazzar's Feast. Daniel 5:17–28	227
VI.	Aug. 11. Daniel Among the Lions. Daniel 6:10–11, 16–23	234
VII.	Aug. 18. The Return from Captivity. Ezra 1:1–6; Psalm 126:1–6	241

LESSON PAGE

VIII. Aug. 25. REBUILDING THE TEMPLE. Ezra 3:10–13; 6:14–16; Psalm 84:1–4 249

IX. Sept. 1. EZRA'S RETURN TO JERUSALEM. Ezra 7:6–10; 8:21–23, 31–32 259

X. Sept. 8. NEHEMIAH REBUILDING THE WALL OF JERUSALEM. Nehemiah 4:4–6, 15–21 264

XI. Sept. 15. TEACHING THE LAW OF GOD. Nehemiah 8:1–3, 5–6, 8–12 272

XII. Sept. 22. MALACHI FORETELLS A NEW DAY. Malachi 3:1–12 279

XIII. Sept. 29. REVIEW: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EXILE AND THE RESTORATION 287

FOURTH QUARTER

SOME SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE

I. Oct. 6. RECOGNIZING OUR DEBT TO OTHERS. Mark 12:28–34; James 2:14–17 296

II. Oct. 13. KEEPING FIT FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS. Daniel 1:8–20 304

III. Oct. 20. USEFUL WORK A CHRISTIAN DUTY. Genesis 2:15; Exodus 20:9; Nehemiah 6:3; John 5:17; 9:4; Acts 20:33–35; II Thessalonians 3:6–12; Ephesians 4:28 312

IV. Oct. 27. THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF RECREATION. Mark 2:18–28 320

V. Nov. 3. RESPECT FOR RIGHTFUL AUTHORITY. Mark 12:13–17; Romans 13:1–7; I Peter 2:13–16 328

VI. Nov. 10. WORLD PEACE THROUGH MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. Isaiah 2:2–4; Acts 17:22–28; John 4:20–21 336

VII. Nov. 17. LIVING WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER RACES. Acts 10:9–15, 30–35; Galatians 3:28–29 344

VIII. Nov. 24. THE HIGHER PATRIOTISM. Jonah 1:1–3; 3:1–5; 4:5–11 352

IX. Dec. 1. THE CHRISTIAN HOME IN A MODERN WORLD. Luke 2:40–52 360

X. Dec. 8. HELPING NEIGHBORS IN NEED. Matthew 25:31–46 368

LESSON PAGE

XI. Dec. 15. THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT IN INDUSTRY. Deuteronomy 24:14–15; Ephesians 6:5–9; I Timothy 6:17–19 376

XII. Dec. 22. THE CHILD IN A CHRISTIAN WORLD. Luke 2:8–20 383

XIII. Dec. 29. FELLOWSHIP THROUGH WORSHIP. Psalm 122:1–9 Hebrews 10:22–25 390

SNOWDEN'S
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST QUARTER

All Christian teachings are important, but some are more vital than others and mount up into mountain peaks of greatness.

This quarter picks out thirteen of these mountain summits and sets them before us. They make an impressive showing and constitute a constellation of stars of the first magnitude.

They begin with the *Fatherhood of God*, for this is the basis of the whole range of Christian teachings. If there be no God and father, then is all our Christian faith and teaching vain and we are infants crying in the night. But we have sinned and broken our fellowship with the Father, and so the dark mountain peak of *sin* next looms into view. Yet there is pardon for our sin, and *Christ the Saviour* is the next logical lesson and great Christian teaching. Christ sends the Holy Spirit to carry out his work of salvation, and the teaching as to the *Holy Spirit* is then brought before us. The Spirit operates through the Scriptures as the means of convincing and converting us, and we next study the Scripture teaching as to the *Scriptures* themselves. *Repentance and faith* are the first steps in the Christian life and the nature and method of these acts of will are brought out. The new life in Christ is one of growth and the process of *Christian growth* is then in order. But Christian growth takes place best in the *Christian church*, and this comes next in this logical order. The church has divinely appointed ordinances, and this leads to the study of *baptism and the Lord's Supper*. The *Christian Sabbath* is another means of grace and we are given the Christian teaching as to this day. It takes money to carry on the world-wide work of the church and this leads to the study of *stewardship and missions*. The Christian life culminates in a great hope and this climaxes the studies of the Quarter with a lesson on the *future life*.

Thus these mountain peaks of Christian teaching stretch out before us in their logical order and invite us to a most promising and profitable line of study.

May we study these Christian teachings so as to tread these mountain heights in experience and turn these visions into victories.

THE IMPROVED UNIFORM SERIES COURSE

for 1929

FIRST QUARTER

SOME GREAT CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS

Aim: To lead the pupil to an understanding and appreciation of the essential teachings of the Christian faith.

LESSON I—JANUARY 6

Lesson: Exodus 34:4–7; Psalm 103:1–5, 10–14; Isaiah 40:27–31; Matthew 6:24–34; John 3:3–6; 4:20–24; 8:40–47; Romans 2:2–11; 8:14–17; I John 4:7–16.

Golden Text: Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him. Psalm 103:13.

Devotional Reading: John 3:3–6; 4:20–24.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What the Heavenly Father Means to Me.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Fatherhood of God.

Lesson Text: Matthew 6:24–34

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment?

26 Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?

27 And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life?

28 And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 Yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith?

31 Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Cannot Serve Two Masters.***
2. ***Be Not Anxious.***
3. ***Quotations from Sky and Field.***
4. ***Uselessness of Worry.***
5. ***Seek the First Thing First.***

The Sermon on the Mount is intensely practical and fits right down into our daily needs.

Anxiety for the future is one of the most frequent and fretting cares of life.

This cloud is rarely absent from our sky, flecking its distant horizon with ominous specks and streaks, or thickening up into a black storm cloud. It spoils much peace and happiness and in many ways does us harm.

Jesus pours upon this cloud some of his most splendid thoughts that he may dissolve it and leave our sky clear and bright.

1. Cannot Serve Two Masters

Attempting to serve two masters throws life into discord and strife.

No man can serve two masters that are diverse in kind and character.

He will either hate the one and love the other, or, reversing this relation, he will hold to the one and despise the other. One can serve various interests and masters if they sustain relations of subordination and cohere in one harmonious system, but he cannot serve antagonistic interests or more than one supreme master. Any such divided service

will inevitably result in disloyalty to one master or the other. The mind may have many subordinate ends and interests, but can have only one supreme end, as the solar system can have only one sun. The soul must revolve around one central purpose, and if it tries to serve two such purposes one will subtly and surely dominate the other.

Divided service distracts the soul.

It introduces confusion and weakens and wastes life at every point. The soul can have peace and power only as all its aims and energies flow in one stream. The man that tries to do two contradictory things will more or less fail in both.

The beauty of a crystal depends upon its unity, and the strength and beauty of life depend upon singleness of purpose. Such a life may have countless interests and aims, but they all are variations of one dominant note and blend into harmony as all the notes of the orchestra are related to the keynote and melt into one music.

Jesus applied this principle of the unity of life to God and mammon or wealth, and declared that we cannot serve both.

The meaning is, not that a man cannot be a Christian and be rich, but that he must follow Christ first and wealth second. He cannot push both of these interests into the first place in his life, but must keep one in subordination to the other.

Yet this impossible thing is an unwritten article in many a professing Christian's creed, and it proves its impossibility in the overmastering strength of his worldly aims and the fruitlessness of his Christian life.

Business or religion, pleasure-seeking or spiritual living, one or the other but not both can be at the center of our life as its dominating principle.

2. Be Not Anxious

The conclusion that Jesus draws from this principle is that we should give up serving mammon by ceasing to be anxious for life on its material side, ever worrying about what we shall eat and drink and wear. His admonition does not forbid our taking thought for these things in our life, for the power of foresight and plan is one of our highest faculties and shapes life at every point.

The root of many a man's trouble is that he does not take thought for his life, but lets it run loose.

The word translated "anxious" means to be divided, distracted, and hence to labor under distressing anxiety, which is the thing forbidden. None of the arguments and illustrations here used by Jesus implies we are not to plan and labor with reference to our future needs and bodily life, but they are all aimed at distracting thought and fretting anxiety; they are intended to stop, not our working, but our worrying.

This anxious thought for our bodily life is the most universal and distracting care in the world.

Not only is it a terrible problem to the man or woman to whom tomorrow's bread is an unknown quantity in the equation of life, but it frets all our lives and may torment the rich and fashionable as much as it does the poor and distressed. Many that now have a sufficiency let their imagination people the future with specters of want.

Any man may drive himself crazy by simply brooding on what may happen.

The pampered children of fortune and fashion spend their most anxious thoughts on food and drink and dress. They may give more attention to their clothes than to their character, and a hat or gown that violates the latest Parisian fashion plate might be with them a graver offense than a violation of the Ten Commandments of Moses. This canketing care kills off the higher life and the spirit is absorbed in the flesh.

One cure for this evil is the consideration that the life is more than food and the body than raiment.

More value and care should be ascribed to the inner life than to outer conditions, to the soul than to circumstances. "The soul of improvement is the improvement of the soul." The chief emphasis should be put on the spiritual state of the soul, for this is the vital center that determines every point on the circumference of life.

If we will only see that our souls are right, all things else will come right of themselves.

It is also implied in this truth that God, who gave us life, will so order his providence that our bodily needs shall be supplied.

The greater gift includes the less, and he who gave us his only Son will not withhold from us any good thing.

3. Quotations from Sky and Field

The great Teacher now illustrated and proved his point by appealing to the Bible of nature and adorned his speech with quotations from the sky and field. Standing in the open air with this great book spread out before him, he called attention to the birds as they sailed and soared around in their circling flights, sowing no seed, reaping no harvest, owning no barns, yet so free from care and happy in their blithesome lives, fed by the heavenly Father.

"Are not ye of much more value than they?" was the pointed and telling application.

Next he called attention to the flowers blooming around and mantling the mountain in a garment of rich embroidery and gorgeous colors: they do not weary and worry themselves with toil, and fretting does not spoil their beauty; and then pointing to one blossom, he declared that even Solomon, the most splendid figure in Jewish history, in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Again the application followed with resistless logic, "Shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

These illustrations must be held to the point in hand and not allowed to stray off to points they do not have in view.

They illustrate the fact that the world is a system of law and of love in which no atom slips out of its place, every instinct is mated with its appropriate end, and provision is made for every living thing.

The bird finds the air waiting for its wings, and nuts and berries ripening for its food. Its life is tuned to music, and it seeks its mate and builds its nest and rears its brood and sings its life away. The flower pushes its green stem up through the earth to find air and shower and sunshine and all the stars, the whole universe, waiting to minister to it and clothe it in gorgeous garments of white and scarlet and gold.

When we look upon the beautiful order of nature and bathe our senses in its fine perfection, we cannot but think, in spite of its pains and terrors, that it is saturated with intelligence and palpitating with love.

Will God arrange the world for birds and flowers and forget his human children? Shall the instinct of the bee find the hidden sweets that satisfy its needs and the cry of the human heart for a Father die away unheeded?

Man refuses to believe this and sees a Father's hand in all the arrangements of the world.

The lesson that Jesus enforces is that we should trust this filial instinct and live as children in our Father's house. If we are true to his laws, as are the birds and flowers, the whole world will wait on us, our Father shall feed and clothe us, and our lives, also free from fretful care, shall be set to music. "He guides me and the bird."

4. Uselessness of Worry

Another consideration against this distracting worry is its uselessness. It is useless to us, for "which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life?" The length of our life is dependent in some degree upon our wise forethought and care, but this distressful worry cannot prolong life but really shortens it.

Work invigorates, but worry kills.

Fretting over the future contributes nothing to the solution of its problems: it frightens away no enemy and it gathers up no energy and bravery to meet impending trials; not one day or hour does it add to one's life.

On the contrary, it wears away one's strength and courage, breeds discouragement and despondency, lowers vitality and shortens life.

The amount of time and energy that some people waste in worrying, if spent in judicious working, would roll burdens off their path and banish the specters of the future.

Equally useless is this undue anxiety to God, "for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Our worrying does not help God to help us, or hurry him up, but our working does.

Our fretfulness hinders him by putting us out of tune so he cannot pour his energy into us or blow his music through us. We enable God to do the best for us when we do our part and then simply trust him for the rest.

5. Seek the First Thing First

The grandest and surest cure for anxious care, like the best wine, Jesus brings forth last. "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

This is the expulsive power of a higher and stronger affection; this is looking up and seeing a heavenly vision that will lift and lure us on; this is hitching our wagon to the stars so that we shall be drawn by cosmic forces towards celestial ends.

Our anxieties mostly fasten on small things that lie chose to the earth, petty matters of business and bread and fashion and pride: these get into our eyes like grains of sand and irritate and inflame them. We should get up out of the dust to some mountain height where we can see the spaciousness and splendor of the sky and the stars of eternity.

We should crowd these petty cares out of our hearts with great ideas and ideals and noble aspirations that will fill us full and lift us up and leave no place for worry.

Many a man spends his days in moody and morbid despondency until some great idea and ambition seizes him: then he worries no more, and all his days are caught up in a celestial current of enthusiasm.

Jesus sets before us such an idea in the kingdom and righteousness of God.

If we see this heavenly vision in its true splendor and come under the spell and sweep of its power, our petty cares will be blown away as dust and we shall lose ourselves in this divine life.

The kingdom, also, will bring with it "all these things": they shall be thrown in extra.

How much this may include we do not know, but we know it will include as much of this world's goods as our Father knows is best. Thus Jesus brought some of his greatest and grandest teachings to bear against this apparently little sin of worrying.

It is useless and harmful, distrustful and atheistic, and we should strive with all our might to quit it.

And I will trust that he who heeds
The life that hides in mead and wold,
Who hangs yon alder's crimson beads,
And stains these mosses green and gold,
Will still, as he hath done, incline
His gracious care to me and mine.

—WHITTIER.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What are some of the masters that compete for a central place in our hearts and lives?
2. What things do we worry about most?
3. What is God's relation to nature?
4. Did Jesus himself have any anxieties?
5. What is the kingdom of God?

LESSON II—JANUARY 13

Sin

Lesson: Genesis 3:1–24; 6:5–8; Mark 7:14–23; Romans 1:18–32; 3:10–18; I John 1:5–2:6.

Golden Text: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I John 1:8–9.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 51:1–10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Sin Is and Does.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Sin and Its Consequences.

Lesson Text: I John 1:5–10; 2:1–6

5 And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1 My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

3 And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him:

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. God Is Light.

2. Fellowship with Him.

3. If We Say We Have No Sin.

4. An Advocate.

5. Obedience as the Means of Fellowship.

John wrote his first Epistle subsequently to writing his Gospel, to which it is a kind of appendix and practical commentary.

> The subject of the Gospel is the Son of God; the subject of this Epistle is the sons of God. The doctrinal truth of the Fourth Gospel is here unfolded into flower and fruit.

The Epistle is not a logical progression of thought, such as is found in Paul's Letters, but a series of vivid views in which sin and salvation are set in strong contrast.

1. God Is Light

John delivers to his readers a message he had heard from Jesus. The message relates to the nature of God and on this subject Christ is the highest authority, for he came forth from God and was with him before the world was.

> He speaks from personal experience and is God himself incarnate. The subject of the message is of fundamental importance to human thought and conduct.

The nature of God is the ultimate ground of the universe and our conception of it will shape and color all our views of life and the world.

> If we think the power behind the universe is impersonal and unknowable, our conduct and character will likely be very different from what they will be if we believe that power is personal reason and manifested love.

What message did John hear from Jesus concerning God? "That God is light."

> This definition of God is figurative and poetical, but vividly significant.
>
> Light is ethereal, pure, diffusive, illuminating, warming, cleansing, the vivifying mother of life, and the painter of all beauty.

Its ethereal essence, born on the borderland between matter and spirit, a mental state rather than a material substance, is a shadow and dim suggestion of the spirituality of God. Its purity, flinging its white beams down into the foulest slime and yet keeping itself separate and unsullied, pictures the infinite holiness of God. Its diffusiveness, pouring its splendor through all the spaces of the universe so that all the worlds swim in its glory, represents the unselfishness of God.

Its illumination, stripping the pall of darkness off the earth, disclosing distant worlds and making the universe as transparent glass, is God's truth. Its warmth, shooting its kindly beams from the sun's burning core into the earth's frozen breast, nursing all the worlds on its glowing bosom, is God's love. Its cleansing virtue, killing the microbes of disease and purifying every foul place, is God's forgiving grace. Its vivifying power, quickening every seed and breathing balmy breath upon the whole earth so that it blooms into a huge ball of blossoms, is God's regenerating grace. Its beauty, breaking its light "into the jeweled bow from blankest white," splashing a sea of colors over the world and leaving it drenched and soaked with beauty, is the beauty of God's holiness.

Thus it is an illuminating message which we have through John from Jesus, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. With such a background out of which creation springs, with the universe thus saturated with light and floating in an infinite sea of splendor, pessimism is killed at the root, the world grows bright and palpitates with the living loving presence of God, and we are prepared for a message of hope and inspiration.

2. Fellowship with Him

This message is fellowship. In the same light which God is we may walk.

There is profound kinship between God and man, and "the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," the human spirit catching its flame from the divine Spirit and shining with its light.

Thus man is not something lumpish and opaque in the path of God's light, but is transparent to his presence and may burn with his beams. All the ideas pictured by light as true of God in an infinite degree, such as spirituality, purity, unselfishness, life, love and beauty, may be true of man in a finite degree.

These divine realities are human possibilities.

This kinship may bind God and man together in fellowship. We may wear his likeness, know his thoughts, feel his love, share his service and at last enter his glory.

Two conditions are necessary to this fellowship: we must first be cleansed.

Sin has stained us through and through and made our nature muddy and impervious to the light of God. Light and darkness cannot agree and dwell together, the light cannot shine where its beams are obstructed; and so the obstructive tempers and passions of evil must be washed out of us and we must become pure and transparent before the light of God can shine through us and dwell in us.

This purification is wrought through the blood of Jesus Christ his Son which cleanseth us from all sin.

His atoning virtue received by faith dissolves the stains of sin and washes the soul white. When the mind of Christ is thus wrought in the heart it is transformed into crystal clearness and becomes transparent and responsive to God's light. The human soul then matches the divine Spirit and shines with his light as the diamond matches the sun and burns with its splendor. As the delicate membranes of the eye vibrate in unison with the mighty pulsations of the sun, so the purified heart pulses in unison with the infinite heart of God, and this is fellowship with the Father.

The other condition of fellowship is that we walk in the light.

We must choose the light and habitually live in it that by continually absorbing it we may become children of light.

When we thus walk in the light "we have fellowship one with another," for the closer we are to God and the more we are like him, the closer we are to one another and the more perfectly and sweetly will our spirits blend into fellowship.

3. If We Say We Have No Sin

Sin, however is self-deceptive and we may think we are free from it when we are really full of it. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Sin always blears and blinds the eyes and thus works self-deception.

The drinking man always thinks he is in no danger, and the murderer can dress up his crime in plausible justification that hides its horrid wrong and makes it look right. Sin puts a stain on the soul that infects its own vision so that it is blind to its own condition and fondly believes in and prides itself on its own whiteness, when to the sight of others

and in the sight of God it may be black as night. When the light in us is darkness, how great is that darkness!

The greatest depth of folly we ever reach is when we say we have no sin.

The man that says this has little acquaintance with himself; his neighbors or his wife and children could tell him the truth; at least his pastor knows better; for such a man is often unpleasant, if not intolerable, to live with and frequently makes a monumental spectacle of his folly.

The very act of saying this is a sin, for it is not the truth and is an offense to God.

John is writing to Christians and cuts up this foolish claim by the roots with the plainest and severest language; and it is incredible how any Christian can claim sinless perfection with this utterance sounding in his ears.

If any man ever did attain unto sinlessness he would be the last to say it, or perhaps even to know it.

"Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone." Paul near the beginning of his ministry called himself "the least of the apostles," but near the close when he was a much better man he thought of himself as "the chief of sinners." The purer one is, the more sensitive he is to any remaining sin in his nature and the less highly he thinks of himself.

Righteousness never blows its own horn, and sinlessness when it is attained will have nothing to say about itself.

Instead of professing that we have no sin it becomes us rather to confess our sins, crying unclean, and then we shall find One who is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

4. An Advocate

John is writing these things to his "little children" with the practical object in view that they may not sin. He is not simply writing them a beautiful letter that will please them and prove his own cleverness, but he is imparting a message from Christ that he would have shape itself into purer hearts and better lives. Not to sin at all is our ideal and should be our constant effort; but human nature is weak and often fails.

Not as an encouragement to sin, but as a cure for it, a way has been opened out of it. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Sin is an offense to God and calls forth his just indignation. The sinner then needs a mediator or advocate to plead his case before God and obtain his deliverance.

Such a mediator must himself be free from guilt and on terms of favor and fellowship with God; and such an Advocate we have in Jesus Christ the righteous. He has free access to God and is in full favor with him and is the most powerful intercessor in the court of heaven; and he freely offers us in our sinful state his services that we may obtain pardon, purity and peace.

And he does not go empty-handed before the Father, but presents a powerful plea, even his own blood as a propitiation for our sins. His self-sacrificing death on the cross has atoning virtue by which God is reconciled with man and man is reconciled with God.

Thus the separation that sin has caused between God and man is healed and there is joy in the child's heart and in the Father's home.

"And not for ours only, but also for the whole world." It is no exclusive and selfish deliverance that we receive and declare, but one that is broad enough for the whole world. The men of every country and clime and race and condition can receive of this gift and find it abundant for all their needs.

One ruddy drop of Christ's precious blood outweighs a surging sea of human sin and there is a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea.

5. Obedience as the Means of Fellowship

How shall we know that our Advocate has wrought our reconciliation and that we know God as our Father? John did not leave this point in doubt. "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."

As conduct is "coarsened thought," or the spiritual ideas of the mind poured into the mold of material deeds, in which form they can be seen and measured and tested, so obedience is coars-

ened faith and love, faith turned into fact, love into life, and worship into work.

As we can see the real desires of our hearts by looking at our deeds, so we can see our real religion by looking at our lives. Our religion is not a private and secret possession that we can hold apart from our life, but a power that must flow into life as a fountain flows into its stream. Faith is not a high speculation that dwells far above our work-aday world, but a spirit of devotion that comes down and shapes itself into the humblest deed.

If we are God's children we will keep his commandments, and if we keep his commandments we are God's children.

Obedience is the visible tangible tie that binds us to God, the fruit that proves the root. We may distrust our profession and doubt our faith, but continued obedience is solid unshakable evidence of fellowship with God.

If we say that we know God and keep not his commandments, we are liars, says John in his blunt speech, and the truth is not in us.

It is to be feared that, judged by this standard, there are a good many liars in the church, and each one should look into his own life and see that it bears witness to fellowship with God: for he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is light?
2. What would happen to our world if all light were shut off from it?
3. What is fellowship? What does it do for us in our life?
4. How can anyone persuade himself that he is sinless?
5. How does Jesus save us from sin?

LESSON III—JANUARY 20

Christ the Saviour

Lesson: Luke 2:11, 30–32; 15:3–7; John 3:14–17; 10:9–11, 14–16, 27–28; Acts 3:1–18; Romans 5:1–11; Philippians 2:5–11; II Timothy 1:9–10.

Golden Text: And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 53:4–9.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How Jesus Saves Us.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Christ, the World's Redeemer.

Lesson Text: Luke 15:3–7; Romans 5:6–11

3 And he spake unto them this parable, saying,

4 What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, *more* than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.

6 For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath *of God* through him.

10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life;

11 And not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

LESSON PLAN

1. ***The Magnetism of Jesus.***
2. ***Murmuring Pharisees.***
3. ***The Lost Sheep.***
4. ***The Beautiful Shepherd.***
5. ***God's Love Commended to Us.***

The word saviour is a much-needed word in our human speech and lost world, and it is filled out to its full meaning in Christ the Saviour.

The background of our lesson is found in the opening verses of the chapter and we shall start with them in order to set the lesson in its proper frame and light.

1. The Magnetism of Jesus

"Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him to hear him." What was the magnetism in Jesus that drew such people towards him? He was not a money-maker, or pleasure-seeker, or dissipated worldling, who was one of them and lured them with the hope of having a good time. On the contrary, his life was at the farthest possible remove from theirs in this respect; yet he exerted a strange attraction over them and they were coming in increasing numbers to him.

Doubtless one secret of this was his simple goodness.

His character stood out before them in transparent purity, sincerity, sympathy and unselfishness, and was thus in utter contrast with the pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes. These despised publicans and outcasts turned from such professional piety with disgust, but they turned towards the genuine goodness of Jesus with unaffected trust.

Pure character, like a flawless diamond, by its own beauty puts a spell on every eye.

These sinners were also attracted to Jesus because he understood them and had sympathy with them. The Pharisees judged them harshly and showed them no mercy, but Jesus welcomed their coming to him and spoke to them graciously.

He also had something to say that they wanted to hear, a message of healing and hope and peace.

2. Murmuring Pharisees

"And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." They were chronic faultfinders and grumblers. Nothing that Jesus did suited them, and this thing offended and exasperated them. "Sinners" were an unsavory and obnoxious class to them from whom they separated themselves by the widest possible gulf. Such people were unclean to them and

the very shadow of a publican was pollution to a Pharisee. To this point of false purity and hypocritical pride had the most orthodox Judaism come.

> Jesus broke through and brushed away all this fictitious and fanatical religiousness, and began to treat all men as his human kind.

He did receive sinners and eat with them: not in the sense in which the Pharisees maliciously spoke, not that he was in sympathy with their sins, but that he was in love with their souls. He came into the world to receive sinners and he receives them still. This charge that the Pharisees hurled at him as a scandal in the hope that it would stick to him and ruin him has become one of the brightest stars in his crown.

> They often unwittingly crowned him in this way; in seeking to cast him down they lifted his name above every name.

3. The Lost Sheep

Jesus proceeded to answer them in three parables that are among the finest treasures of the gospels, so that to this malicious sneer of the Pharisees we are indebted for these diamonds of truth and beauty that sparkle on these pages forever.

> The parables was the best method of answering them, because it enabled him to veil the truth in forms less offensive to them while yet conveying its real import and point.

These parables also were based on their own principles and drawn out of their own experience. "What man of you" was their opening note.

> Jesus thus appealed to their own conduct and showed them that they were following on the lower levels of life the same principle that he was following on the higher level.

The parable of the lost sheep is a picture that presents the whole gospel. One sheep strays from the flock and is lost out in the wilderness or up in the mountains. It is only one and there are ninety and nine safe in the fold, and yet the shepherd cannot rest and searches for the lost one until he finds it. Every part of the parable is suggestive, though its minute points must not be pressed too far. The one lost

sheep represents the sinner, and the ninety and nine safe sheep may represent the whole body of the redeemed on earth and in heaven, and we may also suppose that by the "ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance" Jesus made an ironical allusion to the Pharisees who counted themselves righteous.

His argument then was that, if they were righteous as they claimed, there was no need that he should seek them, but there was need that he should seek the lost sinner.

A lost sheep is a fitting type of a sinner.

The silly creature wanders off from the fold and flock and shepherd, attracted by any bit of grass or shimmering pool, led on by its own appetites, until it is beyond the horizon of its knowledge and is lost in the maze of the wilderness. Then fear seizes it and it begins to run about wildly and bleat pitifully, enemies hear its cries and are soon on its track, and it is in danger of death.

The sinner is wandering off from God into the wilderness of disobedience and wickedness and is not less silly and blind.

He is led on by his foolish appetite and pleasure and passion that at last ensnare him in pitfalls and in dens of evil beasts. The daily newspaper is a moving picture of this wilderness with foolish men and women wandering and running around in it with blinded reason and dulled and corrupted conscience.

Their fate is often as tragic as that of a lost sheep caught by a wild beast, but they differ from the sheep in that they should and do know better.

The sheep nourishes a blind life in the brain, but men have reason and conscience and are always sinning against light.

4. The Beautiful Shepherd

The shepherd who could not rest, even with ninety and nine sheep safe in the fold, but must go out and search for that last lost one, is a true picture of the "beautiful shepherd," as Jesus called himself (John 10:11), who could not rest content with all the pure spirits in heaven but was driven by his sympathy and mercy out into the wilderness of this world that he might seek and save that which was lost. He endured the temptation and persecution, the crown of thorns and the cross of death, that he might find and redeem lost humanity.

He bore man back on his own shoulder, assuming the whole burden and not sparing himself. And when he returns with the lost one, he rejoices over it with great joy.

The meaning is not that one who has sinned and repented is better than one who has never sinned, but that the joy over one that is lost and is saved fills the whole mind and heart, and for the time crowds out all other joy. This is in accordance with the psychological law that one state of mind displaces other states and for the moment fills the whole mental field. It is a familiar truth of experience that when we have lost one thing out of a number, that one on being recovered seems more precious and gives us greater joy than all the rest.

One child snatched from death is for the moment the most precious child of all.

"I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance." Each saved sinner coming back into the Father's house becomes the center of observation and joy among all the inmates. There is still joy in the righteous, but the joy over the returning penitent for the moment fills the spiritual world.

Therefore Jesus was justified in receiving sinners and eating with them. They are the lost ones from his Father's house and need to be sought and found.

Thus the hard unsympathetic piety of the Pharisees was refuted and rebuked, a rebuke that was carried further in the matchless parable of the Prodigal Son in which the unforgiving elder brother played the part of these Pharisees.

This attitude towards our fallen and penitent brothers may still be found among Christians and may not be far from any one of us.

We may still look down upon those whom we may please to regard as "sinners" in comparison with ourselves because we have not sinned in their way. Yet we may be as guilty and even guiltier in our way of sinning and all are in need of the same forgiving grace.

There are among us whole classes of fallen ones, such as those who come out of our prisons or have fallen into moral disgrace, that receive hard treatment from society and even from Christians. It may go

hard with us in the judgment of Jesus if we wrap around us the cloak of self-righteousness and scorn these fallen brothers and sisters.

They also find room and welcome in his sympathy and grace and we should have the same spirit in us and show it towards all lost ones.

5. God's Love Commended to Us

Our lesson passes from the simple teaching in the picturesque parable of Jesus to the profound theological reasoning of Paul.

In the passage from Romans Paul, having established the doctrine of justification by faith, now comes to its practical consequences in character and life.

The preceding chapters are full of logical battle and storm: here we suddenly emerge into peace and calm. The hard knotted root of doctrine that lies buried there, here begins to bud and blossom. The deep doctrines of theology are not abstract theories, unrelated to common life, juiceless and dry, but they are intensely practical and full of sap and sweetness. They may be buried deep in thought and seem twisted and gnarled as the roots of an oak, but they also grow up through character and conduct and branch out and blossom into solid virtues and lovely graces.

In a cumulative argument Paul reaches the conclusion that "God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," thus manifesting a love for us surpassing all human love.

For the love of God is broader
  Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
  Is most wonderfully kind.

Out of the depth and power of God's love for us spring the certainty and fullness of our salvation.

Being justified by Christ's atoning death, we are saved from wrath; and if we as enemies were reconciled through his death, much more, having become friends, shall we be saved by his life. The life of Christ abiding in us will gradually free us from earthliness and beget within us his mind and fashion us into his likeness. Then as the highest outcome and final fruit of justification "we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Joy is the final product of right character.

Joy is the music that issues from a life that has been tuned into harmony with the life of God, and there is something wrong with the Christian who is always striking minor chords and emitting wails of woe.

To be saved is not to be sad. The ideal Christian life is a jubilant stream of sunlit joy. Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is the secret of an attractive personality?
2. Can personality be cultivated?
3. What made the Pharisees unattractive?
4. What characteristics made Jesus a beautiful Shepherd?
5. Is doctrinal preaching and teaching necessary to Christian life?

LESSON IV—JANUARY 27

The Holy Spirit

Lesson: Joel 2:28–29; Luke 11:9–13; John 3:5–8; 14:16–17, 26; 15:26–27; 16:7–15; Acts 2:1–21, 32–33; Romans 8:1–17, 26–27; I Corinthians 12:1–13; Ephesians 1:13–14; 3:14–21; 4:1–6, 30.

Golden Text: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Romans 8:14.

Devotional Reading: John 14:25–31.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How the Holy Spirit Helps Us.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Work of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson Text: John 16:7–11; Romans 8:12–17, 26–27

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you.

8 And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more;

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged.

12 So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh:

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

16 The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God:

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified with *him*.

26 And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought: but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for *us* with groanings which cannot be uttered;

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Expedient that Christ Should Go.

2. That the Spirit Might Come.

3. Flesh and Spirit.

4. The Spirit of Christ.

5. Living in the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is God in us, as the Father is God over us, and Christ is God incarnate for us. The Holy Spirit is thus God immanent in the universe and moving through all things and dwelling in us as our Teacher and Guide and Comforter.

It is through and in the Spirit that God is nigh us, even in our hearts, closer to us than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.

1. Expedient that Christ Should Go

It is startling to us even yet and must have been doubly so to the disciples to hear Jesus tell them, "It is expedient for you that I go away."

Shall he go away and leave them mere beginners in his school of instruction, or as orphans in the world?

Shall he not stay with them through the critical and trying days upon which they were to enter and guide and strengthen them by his personal presence even unto the end?

We may even raise a further question: Why did Jesus not stay in the world through all the Christian centuries to prove his teaching by supernatural words and works and establish his kingdom by his personal presence and power? Is he not needed in the world to-day amidst all the widening thoughts and deep questionings of men as to the meaning of our life, its origin and destiny? Is he not specially needed in view of the divided condition of his followers and of the growing opposition to his teaching and kingdom? Could he not by one word or work answer many of these questions and allay prejudice and put his enemies to flight, even as he did the Pharisees in his day?

But this is not the way God teaches and guides the world in other lines.

The teacher, thinker, master mind and leader can only begin his work and then go, plant a few germinal ideas and then leave them to sprout and ripen.

The mother cannot stay with her child, but must let it go out into the world and find its own way.

It would not be good for the child if she did. By keeping it tethered to her apron strings she would dwarf and doom it to a stunted life of dependence, instead of forcing it off on its own feet to grow through self-help into strength and mastery.

The teacher in the school only starts the scholar and then the scholar must learn to think and grow by his own mental processes, or he will never know anything as he ought to know it. Sir Isaac Newton only dropped a hint and made a gesture towards the heavens, and men are still working out the problems he started.

It would not be good for the world for its great men to stay in it too long: they would dominate and dwarf it instead of developing and inspiring it.

The same principle applied to Jesus himself.

His continued presence with the disciples would have deprived them of the necessity and spur of independence, of walking on their own feet and meeting and mastering their own duties and dangers. Jesus was not training weaklings but masterful men.

There are still other reasons why it was best that he should go. Had he remained he would have been restricted to local places and this would have hampered his world-wide work; and were he now present in his supernatural presence and power, working miracles, this would keep our modern world in a state of excitement that would greatly hinder his spiritual kingdom.

Jesus himself said it was expedient that he should go, and we cannot improve upon his plan.

2. That the Spirit Might Come

However, Jesus himself gave a reason why he should go and that was: "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you." The Comforter or Holy Spirit was already in the world in some degree, but he would come more fully and richly after the departure of Jesus; and he is not limited locally by space and time but is universally immanent in the world and indwelling in human hearts.

He is God in us in vital contact with our minds and hearts with power to lead us into truth and action by his suggestion and guidance.

The special mission of the Spirit is to guide men into truth, and the truth Jesus immediately has in mind is that the Spirit will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. He will convict the

world of sin in rejecting Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour, the greatest sin it can commit; and of righteousness by showing that Jesus was righteous and had gone back to the Father; and of judgment because the condemnation the prince of the world had passed on Jesus would be shown to be wrong.

The Holy Spirit would also continue to reveal truth which the disciples could not yet bear, and this is now going on through all the processes and means by which men discover truth.

This is a wonderful promise and has in it undreamed of floods of light and truth that will yet be poured out upon the world.

We should be open-minded towards and receptive of new truth, for it is filling out this great promise of Christ and is his way of widening and building his kingdom of righteousness in the world.

3. Flesh and Spirit

The Eighth Chapter of Romans is "the sunlit summit of the Word of God." It lifts its lofty peak out of the murky atmosphere of the earthly life into the pure air of the spirit life; and here faith stands far above the shadows and storms of earth secure and serene in the light and the love of God.

It is Paul's masterpiece of logic, and its grand thoughts and splendid eloquence have rolled through the ages like majestic music.

The contrast between flesh and spirit is set in vivid light.

The flesh stands for our life on its earthward side and includes such appetites and desires, pursuits and pleasures as are mainly rooted in the flesh. The spirit is the soul on its heavenward side and includes its higher needs and aspirations.

There are these two sides or tendencies in the soul, and according as the one or the other is the stronger will the life be sensual or spiritual.

They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit. Each lives for and in the things he has most affinity with and desire for. The fleshly man may take to the gambling room and the drinking saloon, and the spiritual man to the reading room and the prayer meeting.

The two natures move in different directions, and they reach different ends.

The mind of the flesh is death, and the mind of the spirit is life and peace. That the life of the flesh sows disease and corruption and reaps death is a terrible fact that everywhere stares us in the face. The coarser sins of the flesh write their own death warrant, and the less sensual but still sinful states and deeds of selfishness and pride are also death to all the higher life of the soul.

But the spiritual mind is life and peace. It is life because it slips into unison with the life of God and keeps his laws; and it is peace because it frees the soul from all the friction and fret, the smart and sting, of pride and vanity.

4. The Spirit of Christ

The test of the Christian life is the Spirit of Christ. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." He may be wise and witty and wealthy, educated and refined, influential and honored, a member and an officer in the church, he may serve at the communion table and stand and preach in the pulpit, but if he have not the Spirit of Christ, he is not a Christian.

The Spirit of Christ dwelling in the heart manifests himself in a Christlike disposition.

The Spirit of Christ is known by his fruits, and these are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, courtesy, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. We can know whether we have these things, and if we have them not, then no difference whatever else we may have and be, we are not Christians.

This test might create consternation and work havoc if applied to our church membership.

Yet this life of the spirit is no academic impractical dream to be lived apart from the world in monkish seclusion and asceticism, but can only be lived in our human world immersed in all its affairs, meeting all its temptations and discharging all its duties. The great Christians of all ages, Paul and Augustine and Calvin and Wesley, Spurgeon and Brooks, were no far-away dreamers but practical men of the world, fighting its battles and lifting its burdens and leading it up into higher levels of thought and action.

The life of the spirit is related to the life of the world as the sky is related to the earth.

The sky lifts its blue dome high above the earth, and yet it also presses its atmosphere down upon it and into every inch of soil and every crack and crevice, everywhere quickening its seeds into life and bloom and fruitage. Strip the sky off the earth and all its life would disappear and an unbroken desert would cover the planet.

So is the spiritual life to cover our whole life and penetrate into its every thought and most secret desire and renew it and fertilize it and cause it to grow into all the fruits of the spirit.

And thus the spiritually minded life is not narrower and in any way poorer and less enjoyable than the fleshly life, but it is in every way broader and richer and brims over with pure joy.

Further, the Spirit of Christ in the believer links him with Christ in his resurrection, and the believer shall also rise to a life of everlasting glory.

5. Living in the Spirit

This relation to Christ lays on us the obligation to live the spirit life. The sinful flesh is not our friend that we should yield to its solicitations; its rewards are not such that we should serve it; and its end is not attractive. On the contrary, if we live after the flesh we must pay the penalty.

A fleshly life is deceitful above all things and ends in bitterness and ashes. Its votaries often confess their disappointment and despair with strong crying and tears. But if by the spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live a fuller and richer life.

The meaning is not that we should deny the body its proper care and use and abuse it.

The body has its rights which must be respected or it will revenge itself upon us. But we are to master the body and not let it master us. We are to keep its instincts and appetites and passions in strict subordination and control and use it only as the instrument of our higher life.

If we so use it, it will support and enrich our spiritual life.

A healthy, well-disciplined body may be as the sounding board of the piano that reënforces and enriches the vibrations of its strings.

Those who live this life led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God: they have been recalled from their wanderings and have had the divine image restored to their souls; they bear the Father's likeness, they are the objects of his love and care, and they are heirs of his inheritance.

Sonship with God is our highest and richest attainment and our grandest dignity and destiny. We enter into this boundless blessing by receiving the Spirit of Christ into our hearts and living the spirit life.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What would happen if our parents and teachers always remained with us?
2. What are the advantages of the Spirit's presence and work in the world compared with the personal presence of Christ?
3. What is the relation of the mind to the body?
4. What means can we use to intensify the control of the spirit over the body?
5. Was Jesus tempted in his flesh?

LESSON V—FEBRUARY 3

The Holy Scriptures

Lesson: Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Joshua 1:8 9; II Kings 22:8–20; Nehemiah 8:1–8; Psalm 19:7–14; Luke 24:25–32; Acts 17:10–12; II Timothy 3:14–17.

Golden Text: Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Psalm 119:18.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:105–112.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Why Read the Bible?

Topic for Young People and Adults: What the Bible is for.

Lesson Text: Psalm 19:7–14; II Timothy 3:14–17

7 The law of Jehovah is perfect,
restoring the soul:
The testimony of Jehovah is sure,
making wise the simple.
8 The precepts of Jehovah are right,
rejoicing the heart:
The commandment of Jehovah is
pure, enlightening the eyes.
9 The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring
for ever:
The ordinances of Jehovah are true,
and righteous altogether.
10 More to be desired are they than
gold, yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the
droppings of the honeycomb.
11 Moreover by them is thy servant
warned:
In keeping them there is great
reward.
12 Who can discern *his* errors?
Clear thou me from hidden *faults*.
13 Keep back thy servant also from
presumptuous *sins;*
Let them not have dominion over me:
Then shall I be upright,
And I shall be clear from great
transgression.
14 Let the words of my mouth and the
meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in thy sight,
O Jehovah, my rock, and my
redeemer.

14 But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

15 And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 Every scripture inspired of God *is* also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Law of Jehovah.

2. Warnings and Rewards.

3. The Meditation of the Heart.

4. Abiding in the Word.
5. The Profitableness of Scripture.

The Nineteenth Psalm is a little treatise on the relation of religion and science, and it compasses the whole subject.

All the books on this matter filling our libraries and still pouring from the press have added nothing essentially new to this balanced statement.

The first six verses relate to science, or knowledge of the world of nature, and the last eight relate to religion, or knowledge of the spiritual world, and these two are complementary parts of the unity of all truth. Faith and knowledge both study the revelation of God as he reveals himself in his Word and in his work. They are the two master builders of the same temple of God, concordant strains of one vast cosmic symphony and song.

They are not enemies but friends and coworkers, and what God hath joined together let not man put asunder.

1. The Law of Jehovah

"The law of Jehovah is perfect" is the golden text of this part of the psalm.

Jehovah has a law and his world is a system of laws physical and mental and spiritual.

He is not a being of whim and caprice, but of fixed principles, and his world is not a chaos in which no one can tell what will happen next, but a cosmos of beautiful order which we can forecast and on which we can depend. This system of law first rules the heavens and in all the material world, and then it rules in the spiritual world of mind and heart, character and conduct.

The law of Jehovah is perfect in that it restores the soul to spiritual order and health.

Sin is disease, and the only cure for it is cleansing and healing that will set all its faculties and activities working in their normal order.

The law of Jehovah is sure in that it makes the simple wise, that is, its precepts impart wisdom to those who are openminded and receptive towards truth.

The Bible is a practical book that fits into our everyday needs and duties and dangers.

The precepts of the law are right, and right is a strong word that undergirds the universe, for nothing is well founded and settled until it rests on right, and not until we have reached the right have we good ground for rejoicing.

The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes so that amidst the murk and mire of error the soul has clear discernment.

The fear of Jehovah is clean, free from any impurity or rottenness so that it is a solid foundation.

The ordinances of Jehovah are true, and righteous altogether, and this is another strong element of integrity without which no law or line of action is good and will last.

Thus the Bible puts emphasis on the fundamental virtues of law and obedience, truth and right, and these are laws of life which do not change with ages and centuries, climes and continents, but are the same in all times and places, the same yesterday, to-day and forever.

2. Warnings and Rewards

The psalmist passes over from the positive side of divine requirements to the negative side of divine prohibitions and warnings.

It is not only important that we know what to do and do it, but it is also important that we know what not to do and keep our feet from forbidden paths.

"Moreover by them is thy servant warned," for warning plays a large and vital place in our life.

The child quickly discovers there are many things it must not do, and this principle and experience run through our whole life. The parent in the home, the teacher in the school, the physician and his patient, the watchman on the railway track and the captain on the bridge of the ocean liner—many are the places where warning must be given and heeded or life will be endangered and may be lost. Most of the accidents and disasters of the world have happened because somebody did not give proper warning.

The Bible is full of these warnings, raising its voice at points of danger, swinging red lights across many a road that ends in wreck.

The psalmist is a good psychologist, for he asks, "Who can discern his errors? Clear thou me from hidden faults."

The dangers of life are not all outside in the world: they are also inside in our own souls.

One of these dangers is that we will harbor errors and faults of which we are little aware. We are poor judges of ourselves, for we have blind spots in our hearts as we have in our eyes so that we cannot see ourselves as others see us. Often may we be so self-blinded in our vanity and conceit or in our hardened selfishness and sin that we may be fools in the sight of others. We are even disposed at times to rush into presumptuous sin, the folly of which is so evident and great that one would think that no sane person could be guilty of it.

The laws of Jehovah will clear us of these hidden faults and hold us back from these presumptuous sins and keep our feet in a safe and solid way.

Warning is not the whole of the law. This is rather an unpleasant aspect of it, as though it did nothing but forbid us doing things, especially the things we like to do. Such law is only preventive and obstructive, but the law also has a more attractive side: it also holds up rewards as well as threatens warnings, and these rewards are sweet and good. They are more desirable than gold and sweeter than honey and in keeping of them there is great reward.

It is often said that virtue is its own reward, and this is true of virtue that has become a habit and is the spontaneous law of our life, whereas sin is its own punishment. The consciousness of a clean heart and upright life is a possession more precious than any amount of gold and literally sweeter than any honey.

The man that has this inner wealth is rich, whatever may be his outward condition, and thrice is he armed against all the stings and disappointments of the world, who has a just soul.

"Let them not have dominion over me": what a bad master is an enslaved mind and heart!

The worst taskmaster we can have over us is an evil disposition within us.

Well may we desire and pray that we may be free from this inner slavery and then we shall stand upright before the world and shall be free from great transgressions.

3. The Meditation of the Heart

How shall we get this law so planted and wrought in our mind that it shall be our unconscious habit and ease and joy? By meditation.

Meditation is the process of quietly brooding over truth and letting the mind and imagination play around it and penetrate into it until it takes possession of the very soul and is incorporated into its very structure.

In rapid reading the mind may pass superficially over the page and not stop to fasten on any definite words or ideas; and in this way one may read quantities of books and gain comparatively little clear and lasting knowledge. The raw materials of knowledge pour into our minds through our sense perceptions, but these materials can be shaped into our own knowledge only as we lay hold of them by our mental faculties and mold them into form and meaning. Any idea or object in the mind is a growing thing that begins to sink rootlets and throw out branches and filaments through the mind and thus relates itself to the entire contents of the consciousness.

One thought suggests another until the whole world of the thinker is organized around the original fact or idea.

All the scattered rays of experience are focused in this center until it blazes with light and heat and masters and moves the will.

Rich inner resources of wisdom and power are a fruit of meditation.

This exercise gradually stores the mind with treasures of knowledge and beauty, ideals and aspirations that are the strength and comfort of the soul.

Meditation reaches its highest usefulness and finest fruitage in the spiritual life.

The things of the spirit are best discerned by the spirit in its own inner vision and reflection. The Bible blossoms out into a new book in the quiet of meditation. The most familiar passage may flash and flame out in unexpected light and heat as we gaze upon it in earnest thought. The psalmist understood this psychology when he prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (119:18).

It is not how much we read but how well we read that measures the profit of this exercise, and when we meditate aright the words of our mouths will be acceptable in the sight of Jehovah and he will be our rock and our redeemer.

4. Abiding in the Word

We now pass to the teaching of Paul on the subject of Scripture and he carries on the same line of instruction as the psalmist. He enjoins Timothy to abide in the things which he had learned. It was not enough that Timothy should get these things: he must keep them. It would not carry him through simply to start: he must keep on.

Many make a magnificent beginning in life that make a miserable ending: they start brilliantly, but they soon stop.

We must not only stir up the gift of God, as Paul urged Timothy to do, but we must keep stirring it up. The hottest fire will soon burn out if it is not fed with fuel and frequently stirred.

There are many burnt-out Christians: they were once afire, but they did not abide in Christ.

Paul indicates some reasons why Timothy should abide in these things.

First, he had been assured of them.

They were not mere speculations and guesses at truth, but realities which he found true in his own experience; he had tested them and was sure of them.

Next, he knew of whom he had learned them.

They were not cunningly devised fables that had been invented, by mythmakers, not second-hand stories handed down to him on hearsay evidence, but he had learned them of Paul and other apostles that were eyewitnesses and told him what they had seen and handled of the Word of Life. Timothy was close to the facts and knew whereof he believed.

And, again, Paul reminds him that of a child he had known the Scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ.

Timothy had been brought up on the Bible and had found it good and he was exhorted to stand by it and stick to it.

We have a much better Bible than had Timothy as we have the New Testament along with the Old and should abide in the book, bind its precepts continually on our hearts and ever abide in Christ.

5. The Profitableness of Scripture

This leads Paul to enlarge upon the inspiration and profit of Scripture. "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be furnished completely unto every good work."

This does not tell us what inspiration is—no satisfactory definition of inspiration has yet been framed—but it tells us what inspiration is for, it shows us its fruits.

The Bible is inspired, not that we may dispute about it and split the church over theories of inspiration, but that it may make us good, teach and reprove and correct and instruct us in righteousness and furnish us completely unto every good work.

We need such correction and instruction in right living.

Living is a difficult art amidst all the error and temptation of our world, and the Bible is an intensely practical book always coming right down into our life and throwing light upon our path and making it plain before our feet.

It is this profitableness that it always has in view, and its writers would have been astonished if they could have seen all the dust of controversy we have raised over its inspiration.

It is this marvelous profitableness of the book that proves its inspiration.

It has stood as a tree rooted down in the centuries, and its leaves have been for the healing of the nations. It has produced righteousness and therefore its statutes are true and righteous altogether.

The Spirit of God has breathed out of it and therefore the Spirit of God breathed into it.

But its inspiration, though it be proved down to its last letter, will do us no good unless it instructs us in righteousness and furnishes us completely unto every good work.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is the meaning of the word Bible?
2. What is a law?
3. Is there any difference between physical laws and spiritual laws?
4. How does meditation enlarge and enrich our knowledge?
5. What is the most profitable way of studying the Bible?

LESSON VI—FEBRUARY 10

Repentance and Faith

Lesson: Isaiah 1:10–20; Ezekiel 18:20–23, 27–32; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 3:1–14; 15:11–24; Acts 2:22–39; Hebrews 11:1–10.

Golden Text: Repent ye, and believe in the gospel. Mark 1:15.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 27:1–5.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Turning from Sin to God.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Way to Forgiveness.

Lesson Text: Acts 2:32–39; Luke 15:11–24

32 This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear.

34 For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself,

The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

35 Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.

36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?

38 And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of *thy* substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight:

19 I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 And bring the fatted calf, *and* kill it, and let us eat, and make merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Preaching that Pricked the Heart.

2. Repent!

3. Leaving Home.

4. Thinking It Over.

5. Going Back Home.

Faith and repentance are foundations of the Christian life. They are first things that must come first.

Faith is the hand by which we lay hold of the new life and repentance is the hand by which we cast off the old life.

We cannot take the first step in any field or work without trust, and we cannot get better life without getting rid of evil ways. Our lesson gives us pictures of these two fundamental states and activities of the Christian life at work.

1. Preaching That Pricked the Heart

We first look in upon Pentecost and hear Peter preaching. The fisherman preacher, illiterate and rough who only a few weeks before swore he did not know Christ, has undergone a marvelous transformation and now stood up before the first Christian audience and spoke with tremendous effect. He began his speech by courteously refuting the coarse charge of drunkenness and then proceeded to work out the true cause of the extraordinary manifestation of the Spirit. He built his argument on foundations on which the Jews themselves were standing, appealing to such facts as " the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day."

His sermon was rooted down in their own history and experience and was backed up with their own prophets and it grew into such power that it overwhelmed them with conviction.

Such a sermon could not fail of its effect, it shot to its mark straight and piercing as an arrow, and " they were pricked in their heart."

Better is this record than if it had read that they were made to feel comfortable in their feelings or were pleased with the preacher.

Preaching that is mainly a display of the preacher's powers may satisfy their critical judgment and delight their literary taste, but it will not convict the conscience and convert the sinner. The soul is not reached until the heart is pricked, and this is its first need. It is full of pride and selfishness and all manner of evil and it needs to be cut and stung with a sense of its guilt. The first means of being cured of a disease is to know that we have it, and the physician that discloses it to us is our friend.

The true preacher must prick us, and we should not be offended at him if he draws the sword of the Spirit to convict us of sin.

Under Peter's tremendous accusation and proof the Jews began to realize what they had done in crucifying Jesus, and under an awful sense of guilt they cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

They were right in thinking that something had to be done.

Sin is not a disease that runs its course and cures itself, but it grows worse and worse until it results in death. The Jews were further right in thinking that something had to be done by themselves.

Salvation is a large process involving elements in heaven and on earth and there is a personal part that each one must do for himself or he never will be saved.

2. Repent!

Peter, without the hesitation of a moment or the waste of a word, gave an answer that exactly and fully met the question of the hour.

The substance of his answer was condensed into the very first word, Repent!

This is the first recorded word in the teaching of Jesus, and it everywhere stands in the forefront of the gospel.

The word literally means, Change your mind.

The word mind in this connection means the whole soul in all its powers of thinking, feeling, doing, its passing states and its permanent disposition; it is a broad, deep word that grasps the inner character and the outer conduct and covers the whole man.

Change this man, change your mind, is thus the first word Christ speaks to us and is the message of the gospel.

Christianity is a revolution starting in the mind and spreading down through the heart and out into the life and producing a new man.

This word rolls a tremendous weight of responsibility upon us.

We are to change our minds towards sin and towards Christ out of indifference and inaction into faith and obedience. This change is something we can work and it expresses itself in baptism and is accompanied with the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter pressed this promise upon his hearers and widened it out until it reached down through the ages even unto us.

3. Leaving Home

We pass to the familiar parable of the Prodigal Son where repentance is seen at work in a picturesque form, a leaf torn from life and that might have been cut out of the morning newspaper.

We first witness a scene in which the home ties are broken. The younger son asked his father for his portion of the property that he might go off. He made no complaint against his father, he alleged no unfairness or grievance, but some fatal thought had come into his heart of wider liberty and a better time elsewhere. So the foolish boy grew alienated from his father.

The father divided his property and gave the dissatisfied son his share, for he would not keep him in his home by force, even as God will let us go out from him if we will.

Events moved swiftly and we next witness a scene of revelry.

The younger son went into a far country where he thought he would be free from all restrictions and could have the best possible time in doing as he pleased. Life became a round of revelry and whirl of pleasure in which his riotous companions bled him penniless.

Sin wastes substance.

Vice is expensive and the devil presents big bills which must be paid.

Sin wastes business energy and skill, poisons the blood, burns up the tissues and rots the bones. It cuts deeper and slashes into character, deadens conscience, and destroys the soul bit by bit.

Finally we see the misguided youth at the bottom of the downward road.

He had a good time while his money lasted and he moved through the many-colored maze of pleasure, but "when he had spent all" was the signal of the end.

Vice spends all that a man has.

It has an insatiable greed that eats up the last dollar and the last atom of good.

Forced to do something to get bread, the prodigal let himself out as a servant to a citizen of the country and was sent into the fields to feed swine. He lived with the pigs and was no better off than they: in some respects he was worse off.

Sin sinks the spirit in the flesh and reduces man to a beast.

It turns the world into a pigsty and sends the soul to the swine-trough.

While his money lasted, the prodigal had plenty of friends and everybody scraped acquaintance with him and hailed him as a good fellow, but now "no man gave unto him." Everybody cut his acquaintance and nobody would give him a crumb of bread or would so much as recognize him.

Sin is anti-social in its nature and work and at last it cuts all friendly ties and reduces the evil doer to terrible isolation in which no one cares for him.

4. Thinking It Over

We have now reached the turning point in the prodigal's career and find him thinking it over. "When he came to himself" is the expressive phrase that introduces the change. The words imply that he had been away from himself, out of his right mind, as indeed he had.

Sin is insanity.

It puts one out of his right mind so that he sees all things in wrong proportions and relations. It perverts the judgment and throws the brain out of gear with the world. This was the condition of the prodigal in his downward course from his father's home to the hogpen and swine-trough. When he started out an alluring scene lay before him

and he saw all things in false lights and colors. Life was to be a round of continual revelry and he saw no wrong in it and secretly laughed at his father's old-fashioned notions.

His father stood in his way and he did not need the old man any more!

But now his evil life has wholly changed its aspects, and the rosy hues his imagination threw around it have all faded away and he sees its somber colors and guilty features. He is no longer blinded to its wrong and ruinous nature, but he sees its sin; and his soul recoils from it as from a dreadful thing.

Reflection has brought him to his senses and restored his sanity.

Famine and want have been his hard teachers that have led him to consider. The swine husks were a continual suggestion of his father's house and the plenty that was there.

So he has got back out of his false world, which his perverted imagination had pictured, into the real world; his thoughts now correspond with things; his mind fits the facts; and he has so far come to his true self, he is a sane man.

Reflection is the first step in repentance, and there is always hope for a man, however far gone he may be, who will stop and consider and thus come to his true self.

5. Going Back Home

In the next scene we see the prodigal on his way back home. "I will arise and go to my father," was the determination that grew up in his heart.

The root of this resolution is the sovereign "I will."

This marks the point where he repented or changed his mind. His will had taken him away from his father and now his will must take him back. His father could not prevent his going off and he could not now force him to return.

The prodigal's resolution grew along the three lines of faith, penitence and obedience.

"I will return to go to my father," was his faith. He still had confidence in his father. Faith is the first condition of approach to God. "I

will say, Father, I have sinned," was his penitence. He did not come back claiming that he had done no wrong and was as good as ever, but he declared himself unworthy to be called a son. "Make me as one of thy hired servants," was his obedience. He did not demand ease and abundance, but would take and do anything, even the hardest menial work.

Such faith, penitence and obedience are always a right path that leads the sinner straight back to his Father's home, and he that cometh to God in this spirit shall in no wise be cast out.

6. Minstrelsy in the Old Homestead

The final scene is one of reconciliation.

The heartbroken father had never forgotten that wandering boy.

Through all the years he had hoped and waited for his return.

The prodigal was approaching the old home with a trembling heart, wondering and fearing how he would be received. But the father was watching for him and caught the first glimpse of him while the son was yet a great way off, and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

The son could not finish his penitent speech before the father ordered out the best robe and a ring for his hand and the fattest calf for a feast, and presently the old homestead, that so long had mourned a wandering son, gleamed with lights and resounded with the music of minstrelsy and dance.

Once more the broken home was restored and the family life was complete.

So waits the Father for the return of his human children and such is the reception they shall receive. The Father will never be satisfied until we are in his everlasting Arm.

"And they began to be merry."

This is the final outcome of salvation. All right relations with God must issue in the music of his home and beatific life. We have not yet come into full and fine harmony with him as long as we are cast down in despondency and despair.

"These things have I spoken unto you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." "In thy presence is fulness of joy; in thy right hand are pleasures forevermore."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Is there increasing unrest in our American homes?
2. Why do young people leave home against their parents' wishes?
3. How can we prevent young people from leaving home?
4. In what sense are we all prodigals?
5. Is God the Father of the impenitent?

LESSON VII—FEBRUARY 17

Prayer

Lesson: Genesis 18:23–33; Exodus 32:31; Nehemiah 1:4–11; Daniel 6:10; Matthew 6:5–15; Luke 18:1–14; John 17:1–26; I Thessalonians 5:17; I John 5:14–15.

Golden Text: If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. John 15:7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Why Should We Pray?

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Christian's Prayer Life.

Lesson Text: Matthew 6:5–13; Luke 18:9–14; I John 5:14–15

5 And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

7 And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil *one*.

9 And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get.

13 But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner.

14 I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

14 And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us:

15 And if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *Prayer as a Performance.*
2. *Vain Repetitions.*
3. *The Model Prayer: Spiritual Aspirations.*
4. *The Model Prayer: Bodily Needs.*
5. *Two Contrasted Prayers.*

Prayer is a universal instinct and in every age and under every sky man has lifted his voice in prayer to God.

It is a simple exercise in which the humblest soul can engage, and yet it is a high art, calling for the best teaching and example, study and effort.

Jesus himself prayed, stood so close to God that he could speak to him face to face, and therefore he can teach us to pray. He was at his best, so to speak, at this moment and never from his lips issued grander, sweeter music than this immortal prayer.

1. Prayer as a Performance

Prayer, the highest and holiest state of the soul, is attended with some of the deadliest dangers, as snow-capped, sky-bathed mountain tops are swept with the fiercest storms. Jesus first warns against some of these dangers.

One danger is that of turning prayer into an actor's performance.

"Ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." The Jews observed stated hours of prayer—morning, noon and evening—and these hypocrites took care at such hours to be caught in some public place, such as a conspicuous corner, where they would strike the attitude of prayer and pose before the crowd. They would thus put on prayer as the actor puts on his mask, and then with furtive glances would slyly observe how their piety was impressing the public.

That kind of prayer did not cease to be performed when the last Pharisee with his broad phylacteries and public attitudinizing passed out of the world.

It repeats itself in every prayer that is addressed to men rather than to God.

The man that, when he begins to pray, whether in the pulpit or in prayer meeting, betrays consciousness of his human audience in affected tones and stilted rhetoric, is simply putting on the actor's mask. "An eloquent prayer," of which we sometimes read, may not be a prayer at all, but only an eloquent performance.

"Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward," said Jesus. They did not really ask God for anything and so they did not get anything.

The praise of men was what they were seeking, and this is what they got.

They were able to fool simple-minded folk for a few minutes and this was their poor reward. Every one can get his own reward, what he is really seeking; but any reward that is squat upon the earth and has no connection with heaven will not add to our worth and wealth, but will only make us poor.

One cure for hypocritical praying is found in private devotion.

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seest in secret shall recompense thee." Of course this direction was not intended to forbid public prayer, which has its necessary place, but over against hypocritical acting it sets a form of prayer not subject to this danger.

The soul that holds communion with God in secret will be less likely to be ostentatious in prayer in public. In all prayer, whether private or public, every door and window of the chamber of the heart should be shut to earth and open to heaven.

2. Vain Repetitions

A second danger to prayer is found in vain repetitions. "Use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Instances of this are found in the conduct of the priests of Baal (I Kings 18:26), and of the mob at Ephesus (Acts 19:34). The theory of such repetition seems to be that God is dull of hearing and needs to have prayer dinned into his ears, or that he measures the value of prayer by the number of times it is repeated.

This kind of praying has by no means died out of the world.

The counting of beads on a rosary, each bead registering a prayer, has reduced it to a mechanical form. The Buddhists have carried this theory to its logical extreme by introducing prayer wheels as labor-saving machinery into their praying and thereby enormously increasing production.

The form that this danger assumes for us is that of falling into ruts in our prayers that become mere mechanical repetitions.

Conventional petitions and set phrases wear grooves in our prayers along which we may roll words without any accompanying action of the mind and heart. This kind of praying may not essentially differ from counting beads and turning a wheel. There is no objection to set phrases and forms of prayer—these also have their place and use—but such forms should be kept informed with devotional spirit and never allowed to degenerate into mechanical repetitions and empty husks.

Jesus cut up by the roots the reason for these repetitions: "for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." The purpose of prayer is not to inform God as though he were dependent on us for the latest bulletins of our spiritual condition, and therefore no amount of reiteration and vociferation will make him any the wiser or more willing. If it be said that this cuts up petitions as well as repetitions, the answer is that this mistakes the true nature and purpose of prayer.

Prayer is not teasing God into giving us favors, but it is communion with him through which he imparts to us blessings he could not otherwise bestow.

His power to give is necessarily limited by our willingness to receive, and prayer intensifies and expresses our desires.

3. The Model Prayer: Spiritual Aspirations

The Lord of prayer now taught the people the prayer of the Lord.

It is a model prayer of marvelous simplicity and comprehensiveness.

The sentences are short and the words are the plain speech of the common people. There is not one hard theological word in it. The whole prayer contains only six petitions and can be slowly uttered in less than half a minute.

Yet it sweeps earth and heaven in its range and grasp and leaves out no good thing. It contains the roots and germs of all worship and blessing.

Its first word strikes the keynote of Christian faith and theology.

More than any other word the name Father tells us what God is, showering upon us the most charming memories and suggestions.

It asserts his sovereignty and power and wisdom, and also his providence and mercy and love. In making him our Father it equally makes us his children and asserts universal human brotherhood.

More than any other aspect this thought of God matches the human soul and fills it full.

"Hallowed be thy name," is the first petition. We might think we could have made a better start. Should not some pressing human need have been put in the conspicuous forefront of this prayer? But it looks straight away from human needs and begins with divine interests. The prayer, however, begins at the right point.

Right relation with God is the central condition of all blessing.

Reverence is the root of all worth and virtue. Unless God be respected the human soul has nothing to look up to, no ideal above it and no authority over it.

"Thy kingdom come." Still the prayer is directed towards divine interests and is forgetting human needs; and still it is moving in the right direction.

Unless there is a kingdom over us with its protection and order, there can be nothing of any worth around us and within us.

"Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." Will this prayer forever move along heavenly heights and never hear our earthly cries? It is the mountain tops, however, that keep the valleys green and all our blessings come from above.

Our own will is about the most dangerous thing we can possess.

Often in its blindness would it rush us into rash and fatal action. It finds its safeguard and path of highest reason and fullest blessing when it slips into coincidence with the will of God.

So the prayer in first laying hold of heaven thereby secures the greatest blessings for earth. When we lose ourselves in God we are filled with his fullness.

4. The Model Prayer: Bodily Needs

The turning point in the prayer is at last reached. "Give us this day our daily bread."

The prayer suddenly drops from the highest spiritual aspirations to the lowest physical need; in the midst of the holiest longings the human stomach has something to say and will make itself heard.

All the material conditions of life, bread, health, prosperity, are rightly the subject of prayer. Religion covers the whole life from top to bottom.

Do not hesitate to speak to God on any subject.

Whatever it is right for you to speak about with others or to think about with yourself, it is right for you to speak about with your heavenly Father.

Yet our requests touching our material life should be kept within modest bounds for the necessaries of life.

We may ask for bread, but not for poundcake, and enough for to-day but not for next year; not for wealth and affluence but just "enough for to-day."

"And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Having lightly touched our bodily needs, the prayer quickly bounds back into the spirit.

Forgiveness is a fundamental need of life and is a root of purity, peace and power. But this blessing is available only for those who have forgiven others.

"And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The great fear of the prayer is not poverty, but evil and it shrinks from every contaminating touch. We cannot desire to enter into temptation in the sense of trial and ought not to enter it in the sense of evil solicitations, but if God takes us in we are to turn the temptation into victory.

Such is the model prayer, short, simple, comprehensive, laying

hold of the greatest blessings and rifling heaven and earth for our enrichment.

If we learn to pray after this manner, we shall know what things we ought to pray for, and whatsoever we ask shall be done unto us.

5. Two Contrasted Prayers

Our lesson gives us two contrasted examples of prayer from the teaching of Jesus to illustrate its principles as set forth in his model prayer. "Two men went up into the temple to pray."

Outwardly these two men were alike: they both went to the same place and for the same ostensible purpose; yet inwardly they were wide apart.

The Pharisee is first etched before us in a picture in which every stroke tells. He "stood," placed himself ostentatiously, struck an attitude, as the word means, while another word describes the standing of the publican.

Inner spirit inevitably betrays itself in outer manner.

The Pharisee prayed "with himself."

His prayer was really a soliloquy.

While professing to be thanking God he was actually congratulating himself; his prayer was spun around the center of his own consciousness and never got outside of his own soul.

The Pharisee thanked God he was not as other men and rolled off a long catalogue of sinners against the dark background of which his own virtues were supposed to shine out in splendid contrast. As he completed his list his eye fell on the publican and nothing else could have proved the perfect consummation of his thoughts as with haughty scorn he uttered the words, "or even as this publican."

Thus the Pharisee perverted his very prayer to an obnoxious exhibition of the sinful pride of his own heart and the meanness and degradation of his own soul.

But in the sharpest contrast the publican stood afar off in his sense of unworthiness and humility and simply cried, "God, be thou merciful to me a sinner."

It is one of the shortest prayers in the Bible, but how packed it is with meaning, what an effective prayer and how much it availed.

What was the verdict of Jesus on these two prayers? "I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

We see the outward show of our worship and it may impress us deeply. But as the large and fashionable audience streams out of the church no one can tell from the outward appearance who goes home justified and who does not: but this is all written down in the judgment books of God.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What are some difficulties in connection with prayer and natural law?
2. Do such difficulties trouble us in practice?
3. How can prayer influence God?
4. Why did Jesus need to pray?
5. What are some dangers in public worship?

LESSON VIII—FEBRUARY 24

Christian Growth

Lesson: John 1:40–42; Matthew 16:15–18; John 21:15–19; Luke 2:40, 52; Ephesians 4:11–16; Philippians 1:6, 9–11; 3:12–16; Colossians 1:9–11; Hebrews 6:1–3.

Golden Text: But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. II Peter 3:18.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Growing up—to What?

Topic for Young People and Adults: Conditions of Christian Growth.

Lesson Text: John 1:40–42; Matthew 16:15–18; John 21:15–19; II Peter 3:18

40 One of the two that heard John *speak* and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ).

42 He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter).

15 He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father who is in heaven.

18 And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

15 So when they had broken their fast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

16 He saith to him again a second time, Simon, *son* of John, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Tend my sheep.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him. Feed my sheep.

18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

19 Now this he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said unto him, Follow me.

18 *My* little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and truth.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. Brother Wins Brother.
2. A Great Question.
3. Peter's Impulsive Answer.
4. Confession Crowned with Blessing.
5. Peter's Love Tested.

Christian life, like all life, is a growth. It begins in a seed or root and sprouts and grows up into trunk and branches and then blossoms and bears fruit.

It is a gradual process and cannot be crowded into quick results.

In our knowledge of truth and in our Christian life, in the work of the church and building the kingdom of God in the world, we must take time and grow slowly and build solidly. A mushroom grows up in a night, but an oak sinks its roots deep and pushes its top into the sun and withstands wind and storm.

Strong Christian faith and life must follow this law of growth. In this lesson we are given several close-up views of how this process works.

1. Brother Wins Brother

Jesus gained his first two disciples himself, and now these started out to gain others. Andrew found Simon his brother and brought him to Jesus. If John found his brother James at the same time, the number of the disciples doubled the first day. Andrew, full of the joy of his own discovery of Jesus, hastened to his brother with the announcement, "We have found the Messiah!" That was glad news to a Jew, and Andrew could not keep it to himself, but immediately imparted it to his brother "and brought him unto Jesus."

Jesus found Andrew, Andrew found Peter: this is the way the kingdom grows, each converted man finding the next one.

It is just so that the tree grows, cell adding to itself another cell, and thus the tiny acorn becomes the mighty oak.

Jesus began this process, and his own converts carried it on.

As the Father sent him into the world, so he sent his disciples into the World to do the same works he did, and greater.

Christians are Christ multiplied and continued.

Andrew found his brother, and kinship and friendship are natural lines of connection along which the gospel still works. Ties of blood are powerful cords drawing others into the kingdom.

God does not mean that these ties, which are so strong and sweet in this world, should be sundered in the next world.

But kinship and friendship are not immortal until they are bound up in the same bundle of life with Christ.

Jesus looked upon Simon with searching insight and said, "Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter)." Peter means rock, and the new name described the new nature that he was to receive through his fellowship with Jesus. Unstable and impulsive on the surface, there was yet lying deep in Peter a bed of rock that became the foundation of solid steadfastness in the kingdom of God.

There are too many Christians of clay: Christ wants Christians of rock.

Andrew remained an obscure disciple, while Peter began to shine with brilliance and became conspicuous and forever famous, the one disciple revolving around the other as a mere satellite and known as "Simon Peter's brother."

Yet it was the obscure brother that drew the brilliant brother within the attraction of the Son of Righteousness and thus made him luminous.

We may not be flaming apostles and shining lights ourselves, but we may draw others to Christ that may become conspicuous in his service. All that we bring to Christ shall shine by his light and shall thus help to light up the world.

2. A Great Question

The lesson now passes to a scene near the end of the ministry of Jesus and Peter again appears. He has been growing in the Christian life and is now farther on his knowledge and experience. When they were far from the busy scenes in which they had been moving, Jesus put to his disciples the question, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?"

This question is still throbbing in the heart of our civilization.

First asked by an obscure Galilean in that far-off solitude, it has come thundering down the ages and is the mightiest question in the world to-day.

Ideas rule life and in the long run sway the world. What men think determines what they are and do.

The theories that are generally held with reference to government, industry, wealth, art, morals and religion, mold human society into all its forms, as the hidden life of the tree shapes every leaf and bud.

What men think of Christ is a master force in the world and profoundly determines its life.

Find a city or community or country in which nobody has any respect and reverence for Christ and that would not be a safe or fit place in which to live.

The disciples gave the answers that men were then giving. The answers were various, but they all agreed in viewing Jesus as an extraordinary character, at least a prophet, a mysterious personality containing an element of the supernatural.

Men are still giving various answers to this question, but they all with rare exceptions take high ground with reference to his character and work.

The answer that Jesus was a myth, or a dupe, or an impostor, is no longer tolerated in intelligent circles.

Even the greatest skeptics see something in this man that they cannot explain on ordinary principles, and many of them have paid tributes to him that fall little short of divinity.

"Religion," wrote the agnostic John Stuart Mill, "cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor, even now, would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than the endeavor so to live that Christ would approve our life." Charles Lamb once said to a company of friends: "If Shakespeare should enter this room, we should all rise; if Jesus Christ should enter, everyone would kneel."

How close such confessions come to acknowledging the very deity of Jesus Christ!

The general mind of the world feels that Jesus is a prophet in whose personality and power there is something supernatural.

Jesus now turned the general question into the pointed, personal inquiry, "But who say ye that I am?" This was the end he was aiming at and coming to, for just then the important thing was, not what men in general thought, but what these disciples thought of Jesus, for their thoughts were in no small measure to determine the thought of the Christian world.

Important as is the general question, far more important to each one is this individual inquiry. No one can escape its sharp personal point. A neutral answer is impossible. Whatever we say or do is a decision; and nothing else goes so deep down and so far out into our lives as who we say Jesus is.

3. Peter's Impulsive Answer

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," exclaimed the impulsive, fervent Peter.

This thought did not then come into Peter's mind for the first time: it had been growing there a long while; the evidence for it had been accumulating; experience had been confirming it; but now for the first time it flashed upon him in the full depth and intensity of its meaning and leaped into clear and masterful expression.

It is a great confession from every point of view.

It grasps Christ as the Messiah, the fulfillment and perfect blossom of the old dispensation. The Jews were blinded by their pride at this point and refused to see in the humble Nazarene the Messiah of God, but Peter and the disciples in the midst of the prevailing unbelief and prejudice had insight and faith to see and say this truth.

The confession is great in that it exalts Christ as the Son of the living God, lifting him above humanity and crowning him with divinity.

This is the heart of the Christian faith. It is the deity of Jesus that gives value and virtue to his humanity and mission and work. Deny him this crown, and he is reduced to the level of our poor humanity, and the world is left without a redeemer who is mighty to save.

Why did Jesus ask the disciples this personal question? Did he

not know what they thought about him? Yes, but he wanted to draw out their faith into full confession and thereby strengthen it.

Our beliefs grow deeper and more definite and vivid when they are expressed.

Public confession is especially potent in giving depth and stability and power to our beliefs. A real conviction can hardly be kept shut up in the mind: give it an outlet in expression and it mounts into mastery.

This is a fundamental psychological reason for confessing our faith before men; and this is another means by which the kingdom of God grows in the world.

4. Confession Crowned with Blessing

The great answer was instantly crowned with a great blessing: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."

Faith in the Son of God is the root of all spiritual blessing, and every duty instantly brings its own reward.

This blessing had several elements. It was rooted back in the revelation of the Father. It did not spring up out of flesh and blood, but came down from above.

Faith in Christ is a rational process according to the ordinary working of our minds, but deeper than our reason there is always also the presence of the Father through his immanent Holy Spirit revealing the truth unto us. No one can come to the Son except the Father draw him.

God's love is older than ours, and at every step in redemption he goes before—and is ahead of us.

The next blessing for Peter was that he should be a foundation stone in Christ's church: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Few passages of Scripture have been subject to so much controversy as this.

The two main interpretations are, first, that the rock on which Christ will build his church is Peter himself, and, second, that this

rock is the faith which he has just confessed. The two views may be combined into the view that it is Peter as making this confession that is the foundation of the church. The Rock of Ages and chief cornerstone on which the church is built is Christ himself, but on this Rock is laid the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20).

All believers are built into Christ's spiritual house as living stones (I Peter 2:25) and are thus foundation for those that come after them and build on them.

Peter not only had the blessing of his faith in his own soul, but he had the further privilege of imparting it to others. He started the walls of Christ's kingdom in the world, and this was a joy in itself.

His work underlies our work and helps to bear us up to-day. We in turn enjoy the same privilege.

In so far as we are built on Christ and impart our faith unto others, we are living stones in the walls of the kingdom and foundation for those who come after us.

The same general explanation applies to the keys that were given to Peter.

5. Peter's Love Tested

The last of these scenes in the life of Peter, showing how he grew in the Christian life, occurred after the resurrection on the shore of Galilee. During all these days since the resurrection Peter must have had an uneasy conscience over his flagrant denials of Jesus at the trial, and while he had bitterly repented yet he knew that something more would be said on the sore point.

"Simon Peter, lovest thou me more than these?" was the question with which Jesus delicately opened the painful subject. Peter affirmed his love and the probe was thrust into his heart three times. Peter stood the severe test and exclaimed, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." This trustful and beautiful answer shows that a great change had been wrought in Peter.

The spirit of self-sufficiency is gone, and he is simply a humble and sincere disciple who has no thought of exalting himself over others and whose profoundest assurance is that he loves Jesus.

"Feed my sheep," was the response of Jesus. Our love to Jesus is not to be a mere sentimental feeling and gush of words, but is to express itself in practical service.

The world to-day is full of hungry sheep and we shall grow in the Christian life and the kingdom of God will advance only as we carry out this command of the great Shepherd.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is personal evangelism?
2. Why does Christian growth proceed so slowly in the world?
3. What part did asking questions play in the teaching of Jesus?
4. What is the greatest question in the world?
5. What is the value of a public confession of our faith?

LESSON IX—MARCH 3

The Christian Church

Lesson: Matthew 16:13–20; Mark 4:26–32; Romans 12:4–8; Ephesians 1:15–23; 2:13–22; 4:4–6, 11–16; 5:22–27; I Timothy 3:15.

Golden Text: So we, who are many, are one body in Christ. Romans 12:5.

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 4:11–16.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Meaning of Church Membership.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Nature and Function of the Christian Church.

Lesson Text: Mark 4:26–32; Ephesians 1:22–23; 4:4–6; 11–16

26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth;

27 And should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how.

28 The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

29 But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come.

30 And he said, How shall we liken the kingdom of God, or in what parable shall we set it forth?

31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown upon the earth, though it be less than all the seeds that are upon the earth,

32 Yet when it is sown, groweth up, and becometh greater than all the herbs, and putteth out great branches; so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof.

22 And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.

11 And he gave some *to be* apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error;

15 But speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, *even* Christ;

16 From whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in *due* measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *Seed Cast upon the Earth.*
2. *The Mustard Seed.*
3. *The Church the Body of Christ.*
4. *Gifts Differing.*

The church is seldom mentioned in the teaching of Jesus: he usually speaks of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven, practically synonomous terms. The church is narrower than the kingdom as including only organized believers whereas the kingdom includes all the children of God whether they are in the church or not.

The church is a means to the kingdom and for practical purposes may be identified with it.

1. Seed Cast upon the Earth

" So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth."

This brings the kingdom down upon the ground in more senses than one. It relates it to the natural processes of the world.

It is not a foreign and alien intruder in this world, but is at home among us and is as natural as farming. Jesus constantly illustrated his religious teaching from the common things of life and thus made his kingdom as vital and rational as our everyday experience.

The kingdom begins as seed sown in the earth. This seed is the gospel truth and the earth is the human soil in which it is cast.

Seed is a striking symbol of truth, for truth, like seed, has a mysterious principle of life by which it lays hold of the mind and begins to sprout.

Any truth taken into the mind throws out filaments of mental association and absorbs into itself all the truth in the mind and thus roots itself in the whole contents of consciousness and grows into fruit.

The sowing of the seed is the human part in the process, just as is the sowing of the seed in our fields.

The minister and teacher are doing this, and so are all Christian

workers. When the seed is sown the sower must wait until it grows up, "he knoweth not how."

The farmer knows much about corn, but one thing he does not know,—how it grows.

The biologist knows much more than the farmer about corn, but he is equally ignorant of how it grows. We can plant the corn and then we must leave it with the sun and shower and let them do their work.

So we can teach truth, but we cannot follow it into the depths of the mind and heart and trace the secret processes by which it grows.

Only the Holy Spirit of God knows this secret, and we can only do our part and leave the results with him. There are, however, germinating forces in the soil that stir the seed into activity. The sun brings its power to bear upon it and presently it swells and sends down a slender root and pushes up a tiny green blade and the wonderful process of growth is under way.

The process is one of slow and orderly development: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.

This process of orderly development is God's way of doing things throughout the whole realm of nature. The same process rules in the kingdom of God. Things do not come all at once or out of their proper order, but first things come first and last things come last. Conviction precedes conversion, and fact comes before faith.

In our religious teaching we must not expect quick results or out of their due order and time.

Often we must wait and see only blades and not grow impatient because the full corn does not immediately ripen.

Yet fruit is the proper end of growth, without which the whole process is so much loss.

And the end of Christian teaching and believing is a harvest when the reaper is to go in and gather a harvest. We are to work for practical results and see that we get them. A farmer that every year ploughed and sowed his fields and never gathered a crop would be disgraced.

We can be as sure of results in the field of the kingdom as we can on the farm, and we should have the wisdom and patience to secure a harvest.

2. The Mustard Seed

The grain of mustard seed presents the same truth from a different point of view. The great Teacher knew how to throw light upon a subject from different angles so as to make it grow luminous with interest and power; he multiplied illustrations and yet did not simply repeat himself and tire his listeners.

The contrast between the smallness of the beginning and the greatness of the result in the kingdom is the point of this parable.

A grain of mustard seed is one of the smallest of seeds, yet it is not despised and cast away on this account but is sown in the ground with as much care and faith as the larger seeds. The earth does not disown it, nor the showers refuse to fall upon it, nor does the sun hide its face from it; but the whole solar system begins to nurse it with as particular care as it does an oak or a giant redwood.

And all this care is abundantly justified, for presently the tiny seed begins to sprout and show what it can do.

It spreads its roots down into the soil and reaches its stalk up towards the sun and finally grows into trunk and branches to which the birds flock and turn it into a choir gallery of song.

Small beginnings are never to be despised in any field.

An atom is so small that no human eye, using the most powerful microscope, has ever seen one, and still smaller are the electrons which compose it, and yet the whole material universe is built up of such infinitesimal particles. Snowflakes are tiny fragile things, lighter than the smallest feathers, and yet pile them up on a mountain and they form vast snowfields that come roaring down in destructive avalanches or condense into glaciers from which pour rivers. A redwood growing through thirty centuries and towering up three hundred feet grew out of a single small seed, and all the oaks in the world sprang from one acorn.

Great doors swing on small hinges, and great events in history turn on trivial points. A cobweb, it is said, spared the life of the fleeing Mohammed and changed the history of the world, and several apparently insignificant happenings caused the disaster of Waterloo and sent Napoleon to his doom. Almost every one can see how small events have turned his career this way or that, and things he once

despised have become dominant in his life. A page in a book, an item in a newspaper, or a chance word from a stranger may change one's whole ambition and effort.

The kingdom of Christ started in small beginnings which men despised and ridiculed.

They crucified the King and scattered his affrighted disciples and thus they thought they had ended the whole matter.

But there was divine life in this precious Corn of Wheat which could not be stamped out.

Though it seemed to be buried forever in the hard soil of the Roman Empire, yet it began to grow and sprout and spread in secret and then it pushed up through the iron crust into the unfriendly air. But all adverse forces and bloody persecution of the empire could not stop or hinder its growth, and in due time a Christian Cæsar sat upon the throne. The triumph of Christianity during these early centuries is one of the wonders of history, exciting the perplexed astonishment of such an infidel historian as Gibbon himself.

And the same growth has pushed the kingdom of God down through the centuries and out over the world.

To-day its branches spread out over every continent and around the globe. It has become a world tree in which many institutions find lodgment. Not only religious organizations, such as the church and Christian schools and hospitals flock to it, but the creative forces of our modern world, such as democracy and education and liberty, lodge in it.

We never know how great a thing we may be doing when we sow a seed of Christian truth and service. Our humble word or deed may lead to the conversion of a child who will play a great part in the kingdom or world and even giving a cup of cold water in the Master's name shall in no wise miss its reward.

3. The Church the Body of Christ

While Jesus mentions the church only twice in his teaching, Paul mentions it often and the name is used in the books of the New Testament other than the four Gospels one hundred and twelve times.

The kingdom is spiritual, but spirit cannot go naked through the world but must have a body and hands and feet.

Paul, in the first passage in this part of our lesson, states that "God put all things under" Christ's "feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

The figure of the church as the body of Christ asserts the organic unity of all believers as members of this body.

However they may differ they are all related to him as the body to the head and so in him they cohere into organic unity and harmony.

This unity of the body of Christ is not yet visibly worked out, and the divisions and strifes within this body are the tragedy of Christendom.

Yet we must not look for a political or mechanical unity in which all Christians are gathered into one church organization, for such a body would grow unwieldy and inefficient and unspiritual and breed corruption and break down.

Yet there is a spiritual unity of believers that is deeper than outer unity of organization and is its real unity.

This unity is growing and is approaching the ideal among Protestant branches of the church, and even the greater divisions of the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant communions are drawing nearer to one another in mutual sympathy and understanding.

This unity, however, must be a slow growth and it may take a long time to realize it fully.

The body of the church is not only the center of unity of believers, but is also the means by which the kingdom spreads and does its work in the world.

It manifests the presence and spirit of Christ among men and is all of Christ that the world sees. As the body is the outer manifestation of the soul and is all we see of one another, so is the church the manifestation of the presence and power of Christ in the world. Men outside the church derive their whole idea of what the kingdom of God is and what is its real spirit and work from what they see in the church. No wonder the world often gets poor and pitiful ideas of

the kingdom of God when it sees how far from the spirit of Christ and how fruitless in its work the church is.

As members of this body it is our individual duty to endeavor to show forth the spirit and do the work of Christ so as to worthily manifest his presence in the world.

4. Differing Gifts

The body has different organs each adapted to a different work. Eyes and ears, hands and feet, brain and heart, every muscle and nerve in the complex organism of the body has a special work to do, and only as all work together in harmony can the body fulfill its purpose as the manifestation and servant of the soul.

Paul draws out this point in the second passage from Ephesians in this lesson.

That we have "gifts differing" (Romans 12:6) was a favorite idea with Paul, and he here illustrates it in the different offices and services to which believers are appointed in the church. Some are appointed to be apostles and prophets, others evangelists and still others pastors and teachers; and in another list of these officers he mentions "helps" (I Cor. 12:28) as a general class taking in everybody that is given something useful to do.

The efficiency of the body of Christ depends upon the faithfulness of each one in his own place and the coöperation of all in the common work.

This is the principle of the division of labor that is so universal and efficient in the work of the world. We cannot all do the same thing, for then multitudes of other things would be left undone. But each one can do his individual task better than any other worker and all together can enormously increase the total production in that field.

Each one of us is given a gift differing and a task of our own which we are to do and which will not be done if we are unfaithful to it.

There will then be a missing stone in the great city of God, a silent note in the music of the universe. Let us each one find our appointed task and do it with our might.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is a parable?
2. What other callings did Jesus use to illustrate his kingdom?
3. Can any calling be used for this purpose?
4. Why is the church as the body of Christ so weak in the world?
5. What can we do to increase its efficiency?

LESSON X—MARCH 10

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Lesson: Matthew 3:13–17; 28:19–20; Acts 2:38, 41; Romans 6:1–14; I Corinthians 11:23–39.

Golden Text: This do in remembrance of me. I Corinthians 11:24.

Devotional Reading: Revelation 7:9–17.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Meaning of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Place of Baptism and the Lord's Supper in the Christian Life.

Lesson Text: Matthew 28:19–20; I Corinthians 11:23–29

19 Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

23 For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread;

24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me.

25 In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***The Great Commission.***
2. ***Baptism.***
3. ***Bread and Cup.***
4. ***A Gleam of Prophecy.***
5. ***A Word of Warning.***

Ordinances are outward signs of inner spiritual acts and states.

The sign may not be the essential thing, but it may be a needed means and help.

The cup is not as important as the water, but if we refuse the cup shall we get any water? Or shall we get as good water and in as good a way? All social institutions and forms of life have such badges and signs and it is good form to accept and wear them.

Jesus used ordinances sparingly, but he did institute and use two, baptism and the Lord's Supper, and we do well to accept them as signs and means of entering into fellowship with him and using them in his service.

He accepted them himself and if we refuse them we cannot quote his example and claim his sanction in our course.

We thereby in some measure cut ourselves off from the body of Christ and follow an extreme individualism, and such a course usually restricts our life and costs us heavily.

1. The Great Commission

Baptism is here embedded in the great commission and we may first look at its great setting.

The time was growing short and the hour was come when Jesus must announce his final program.

A mountain in Galilee was the appointed place for this utterance, for this thing was not done in a corner but in the open, even on a mountain top where all the world and all the ages could hear.

And the message matched the mountain, massive and mighty in proportion and power, with its summit bathed in the blue heaven and its base rooted deep in the earth.

What was the message? "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth."

This is the tremendous affirmation with which Jesus prefaces his program.

He did not set out on the enterprise of world redemption without counting the cost and seeing that he had the means, and nothing in it shall fail which all power in heaven and on earth can do. But since all power can do all things, we might think that Jesus would with his own mighty hand bring immediate redemption to all the world.

But this is not the divine method. "All authority hath been given unto me," "Go ye therefore," is the logic of the great commission.

Divine power must have human means through which it can work.

Have you ever noticed a giant steam hammer at work? What enormous power is stored up in the boiler. The hammer, weighing possibly half a ton, shoots down like lightning and strikes a tremendous blow that crushes a great bar of steel, and then again it slips down softly and delivers the lightest, gentlest tap that would not hurt a child's finger. What controls and guides it? The workman's hand on the lever. The all power of the steam and the puny power of the human hand work together in beautiful harmony. Either without the other could do no constructive work, but both together forge huge axles on which will roll the world's commerce, or mighty shafts and anchors that will drive ships through foaming seas and hold them in the fiercest storms.

So the power of omnipotence is lodged in the risen and glorified Christ, but it waits for our coöperation to strike the mightiest blows of power or to slip down in the gentlest accents of love. He stands back of us with his power, but we must do his bidding.

2. Baptism

On what mission were the disciples sent. To "make disciples of all the nations."

Christianity is no racial or national religion.

It refuses to stop at any mountain range or ocean shore or red or blue political line on the map, but it is a universal faith that like the atmosphere must flow over all boundaries and obstructions and envelop the whole earth, with this command committed to us we should not think to shut the gospel up in our own lives and land but give it wings and send it over all continents and seas.

The nations are to be baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

This is the germ of a baptismal formula into the name of the blessed trinity.

Baptism symbolizes saturating power, and the nations are thus to be filled with the Spirit of the triune God.

Baptism is not a mechanical or magical rite that will in itself work our regeneration, but it is the outer sign of this inner change, and we should accept it as a means of our obedience, even as Jesus did himself.

The nations are also to be taught to observe all the teachings of Jesus.

Conversion is not the end of the Christianizing process but only its beginning. After men have confessed Christ they must still be taught and trained in Christian doctrine and practice, and all life is a Christian school.

The ground work of this teaching is all things whatsoever Christ commanded us.

It is true that the Christian may and should gather and use truth from all fields; all things are his. But Christ laid the foundation principles on which our superstructure is to be built, he sowed the seeds that we are to plant and that are to germinate and bloom in all our harvests.

His teaching is broad and deep enough to bear up all we can build upon it; his sayings contain the seeds of all our modern life and of life yet more abundant and everlasting.

3. Bread and Cup

Paul gives us his account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, which closely corresponds with the accounts in the Gospels.

The emblems and ordinance are rich in ideas.

The great central idea is sacrifice. The cross has a blood-red heart. The broken bread represents the broken body, and the poured-out cup the shed blood of Christ.

The scarlet thread of sacrifice is woven into the whole web of the universe.

The very limestone rock on which the cross stood was composed of the tiny bones of countless myriads of animals that gave up life that that cross might stand. The wheat is broken and ground up that it may impart its life to higher life. The mother lays her life on the

altar of sacrifice for her child, and the father will sacrifice the last dollar and drop of blood for his wandering boy.

These are but drops of sacrifice out of the infinite heart of God. The supreme instance of sacrifice is the cross of Calvary on which the Father offered the Son and the Son freely gave himself.

This is an offering, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, that has virtue to atone for the guilt of sin and cleanse away its vileness.

Another great idea in this ordinance is that of food for the soul.

The bread passes into the blood and is assimilated into tissue and reappears in the strength and beauty of the body. But man cannot live by bread alone. The soul has its hunger and must have bread or die.

Christ is this bread of life that cometh down from heaven.

He satisfies our spiritual needs and gives us life everlasting.

Another prominent idea in this ordinance is fellowship.

It is the "communion" of the Lord's Supper, communion with him and with one another. "We, being many, are one body and one bread." Here all divisive lines converge and melt into the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. The world over, eating together is a sign of fellowship, and when we receive this bread we hereby proclaim that we are no more strangers and enemies, but brethren and children in the household of God. The closer we get to Christ the closer we are to one another, as all the radii of a circle converge and touch as they approach the center. These and many other truths are expressed by this bread and cup.

The outward emblems are simple and unadorned, but the inner meaning is deep and rich.

The significance of any sign is not to be measured by the nature of the sign itself. The flag of our country is only so much silk or muslin, and yet what a mighty meaning does it carry with it wherever it floats, representing the law and order, the power and majesty, the history and glory of a great nation. A continent may be compressed into those few square feet of silk. A little lock of hair carefully preserved, a little old shoe well worn at heel and toe, may seem to the careless

eye to be of slight significance, but to the bereaved mother they suggest thoughts and memories that are too deep for tears.

So this bread and cup may seem common and insignificant to the world, but to the believer they are precious, suggesting thoughts and memories and hopes that the world cannot give or take away.

4. A Gleam of Prophecy

The ordinance also has in it a gleam of prophecy. It looks back upon the past in remembrance, but it also looks out upon the future "till he come" in that day when Christ will "drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

It thus links Christ's first with his final coming.

How slender and frail seems the thread and yet how long it has lasted and will last!

How perishable are the elements and yet how imperishable is the memorial! It is one of the oldest things in the world and will yet outlast all the fabrics of human hands.

It must have in it some substance and vitality that cannot die.

It has deep rich roots, but it has not yet come to perfect blossom and ripe fruit. Full of meaning as is its retrospect, fuller still is its prospect. These symbols are also shadows of things to come which eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard. If we could discern the real meaning of this bread and cup, these common elements would shine with the splendor of the celestial banquet table, and as we receive them there would float in upon us the song of Moses and the Lamb.

Christianity is a religion of hope.

It has great memories but still greater prospects. With it the best is ever yet to be. Every time we receive this ordinance we are bidden to cherish the hope of "some sweet day" when our Lord will come to take us home.

"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the Mount of Olives." So closes the record of this memorable night. Having instituted and partaken of such an ordinance, it was fitting that they should sing.

Right under the shadow of the cross Jesus planted a song blossom.

He joined in this hymn himself and then went straight to his passion.

If we are united in fellowship with him, we can sing hymns of faith and praise, and then go forth to do our work and bear our cross; for he will preserve us in trouble and compass us about with songs of deliverance.

5. A Word of Warning

Paul closes his account of the institution of the Lord's Supper with a word of warning of his own. "Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body." Paul was writing to the Corinthians where scandalous doings had crept into the observance of this ordinance. Some of them had actually turned it into a drunken feast and thereby relapsed into their heathen rites. No wonder that Paul rebuked them in such severe terms.

The rebuke may sound harsh and threatening to us and beget within us a fear of partaking of this ordinance.

Some Christians have been so afraid of this condemnation that they have refrained from confessing Christ and sitting at this table until late in life.

There is little danger of such abuses attending our observance of this Supper and we should not have such fears.

However every good thing may be abused and perverted, and the best things are subject to the worst perversions.

We may still observe his ordinance in such a spirit of irreverence and light-mindedness, or of ostentation, or of formal observance without the inner spirit of remembrance and communion and hope, as brings us under this same condemnation.

We ought to prepare for this table in quiet self-examination and draw near to it reverently, but with faith and joy.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How can we carry out the great commission more efficiently?
2. Why was Jesus baptized?
3. What are some different views about the Lord's Supper?
4. How universally is the Lord's Supper observed to-day?
5. How may we better observe this ordinance?
6. What dangers attend all ordinances?

LESSON XI—MARCH 17

The Christian Sabbath

Lesson: Genesis 2:2–3; Exodus 20:8–11; Matthew 12:1–14; 29:1–10; John 20:19; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:1–6; Revelation 1:10.

Golden Text: For the Son of man is lord of the Sabbath. Matthew 12:8.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 92:1–5, 12–13.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Keeping the Lord's Day.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Lord's Day in Modern Life.

Lesson Text: Exodus 20:8–11; Matthew 12:1–8; John 20:19; Revelation 1:10

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work;

10 But the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God; *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

11 For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

1 At that season Jesus went on the sabbath day through the grainfields; and his disciples were hungry and began to pluck ears and to eat.

2 But the Pharisees, when they saw it, said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath.

3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was hungry, and they that were with him;

4 How he entered into the house of God, and ate the showbread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests?

5 Or have ye not read in the law, that on the sabbath day the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless?

6 But I say unto you, that one greater than the temple is here.

7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I desire mercy, not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

8 For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath.

19 When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Law of Moses.

2. The Sabbath of the Pharisees.

3. The Sabbath of Jesus.
4. The Sabbath Made for Man.

Our lesson starts at Mount Sinai where Moses stood and legislated for all the ages. It was an isolated and lonely mass of rock far from civilization, as it is to this day, but it is one of the most famous and sacred mountains in the world. It rises abruptly up from the plain, a somber mass of granite striated with ribbons of metal veins, a wild and awful solitude.

Yet in moral magnitude it overtops the Alps.

It looms up massive and sublime in history and overshadows all the centuries. On the top of this mountain stood Moses, the tallest figure in ancient history, looking down on future ages and framing laws for all coming time.

On the top of this mountain the Bible was born, for on its summit in the solemn silence Moses received the Ten Commandments, the germ and root of this holy Book.

1. The Law of Moses

The Ten Commandments are the basal principles of all religion and morality. While they were promulgated on Sinai, yet they were not originated there, but had been in the world, from the beginning.

It would not be possible to start a moral world without them.

They were old when Sinai's solid granite was molten rock and had their origin in the eternal character of God. By them the everlasting heavens are kept fresh and strong. They are not ceremonial institutions, which are necessarily local and temporary, but are universal and eternal laws of life. They are not limited in their application and obligation by continents and seas, racial lines and national boundaries, climate and custom, but, like gravitation, they are binding and operative under every sky and throughout all worlds.

These are the rocky ribs of the moral world, the foundation of character and society, and the individual or nation that forgets them shall perish.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Man must live by bread, but he cannot live by bread alone.

Work and worship are two fundamental necessities of his life and the fourth commandment provides for both.

"Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work." Labor is enjoined as positively as rest.

Labor is a religious duty and the man that will not work is worse than an infidel and should not be permitted to eat.

But life must not be all labor, for too steady work wears the body out and nerves snap and the brain breaks down. The body needs rest and recuperation, the mind needs recreation and instruction, and the soul needs meditation and worship. On one day in seven the fourth commandment stops the rush and toil of life and gives us rest in the home and sanctuary.

We ought to appreciate this day and use it wisely and well, for it is one of the greatest blessings of our life.

Other days bind us to the seen and temporal, but this day links us with the unseen and eternal. Yet our religion should not be confined to the Sabbath, but the spirit of this day should be diffused through all our days.

There are enemies to this day in our life.

Industry as carried on by great corporations is often one of them. Profits and dividends would override this day and keep the wheels of manufacture and commerce turning in order to increase production and gain. Workingmen may be ground down under these incessant wheels as ruthlessly as though they were iron monsters feeding on human flesh and blood, as indeed they may be.

Business men at the head of these industries, who are often Christian men, should take this matter to heart and in hand and see that their employees are given their day of rest.

Pleasure is another enemy of the day.

Not that the day should be made unwelcome as an enemy of pleasure, but its legitimate recreation should not run away with us from reverence and worship and turn it into a day of dissipation and worse. The automobile should not be used to empty the church but to fill the church and then it may take us out into God's first temples.

The proper use of the day in our modern world is often a perplexing problem, especially for those shut up in the cities, but we can find a way of using it without abusing it and turning it into a means of better life.

2. The Sabbath of the Pharisees

From Moses to the Pharisees is a long stride and much has happened, and not all for the better. Good institutions are likely to degenerate and from time to time need to be reformed.

The passage from Matthew puts Jesus in the light of a lawbreaker.

One of the points in which he came into most frequent collision with the Pharisees was the Sabbath. They pretended to reverence the day above all others and to guard it with the most ostentatious piety and affected to be scandalized by the way Jesus treated it as sacrilegious and lawless. They had overloaded it with rules and spun restrictions around it until its liberty had become a terrible bondage.

Jesus boldly smashed these traditional regulations and made room in the day for liberty and life.

Yet while destroying these human additions he did not destroy the day itself, but observed its rest, conserved its sacredness and perpetuated its obligation.

On this particular Sabbath Jesus and his disciples were passing through a wheat field. The paths and roads ran through the fields in this fenceless country and there was nothing unusual in their being there. The disciples were hungry and began pulling off heads of wheat and, rubbing out the grains in their hands, to eat them. The act was lawful (Deut. 23:25) and would have been innocent in any country on that day.

But some Pharisees observed it and this was their chance. They pounced upon the act as unlawful on the Sabbath and made a grave point out of it.

It was a very small matter, but the controversial ecclesiastic can often see a mote when he cannot see a moral mountain.

Their objection to the act was not that it was unlawfully taking other people's property, but that it was working on the day of rest.

For the command to do no work on the Sabbath had been spun out by the Pharisees into a thousand petty prohibitions. "Grass was not to be trodden, as being akin to harvest work. Shoes with nails were not to be worn, as the nails would be a burden, and a burden must not be borne." In the same way, "plucking grain was wrong because it was a kind of reaping, and rubbing off the husks was a sin because it was a kind of threshing."

These were "the traditions of the elders" with which the scribes "made the commandments of God of none effect" (Matt. 15:16) and the "heavy burdens grievous to be borne" which they lay "on other men's shoulders; but they themselves" would "not move them with one of their fingers" (Matt. 23:4), for they resorted to all sorts of subterfuges to evade them.

This is what religion runs into when it keeps the letter and loses the spirit.

The danger lurking in all religious ordinances is that they will grow so tight and hard that they will constrict the life out of religion itself.

We must beware of adding human regulations to divine institutions.

The Sabbath is a day of rest and gladness, and we must not add to it restrictions and prohibitions that make it a burden grievous to be borne.

This has been done in some communities and homes until the day was dreaded and the children especially were glad when it was gone.

3. The Sabbath of Jesus

Jesus met this objection with a parallel case. He put himself on common ground with his critics where they had to agree with him.

The objection implied ignorance of their own Scriptures.

Had they not read of David, how when he was hungry he went to the tabernacle and ate of the shewbread, an act that was unlawful and sacrilegious for any but the priests? If David on the ground of hunger could override the law of the tabernacle, could not his disciples on the same ground pluck and eat grain on the Sabbath?

This argument enlisted David on the side of the disciples, and the Pharisees were silenced, for they dare not contradict David.

In the same line, he asked them if the priests did not work on the Sabbath in the temple, and yet were guiltless? Might not One greater than the temple do the same?

The principle of these cases is that lower needs must give way to higher necessities.

Even if it had been admitted that plucking grain on the Sabbath to satisfy hunger was a violation of the rest of the Sabbath, yet hunger was a higher necessity than rest and had to have its way.

Ceremonies must always stand out of the way of humanities.

When human life is in danger, ceremony must get out of the way. A fire may put an end to family worship, and sickness turn the Sabbath into a weary watching. The Sabbath is an ordinance that ministers to our higher needs, but it must not be allowed to hurt us, and its general law of rest is overridden by "works of necessity and mercy."

This principle introduces a large element of flexibility and liberty into the Sabbath.

On this day food must be prepared, the physician must visit the sick, the drug store must be open, the milk wagon must run, the city must be safeguarded, the ship on the ocean must keep going, and countless things that involve work must be done.

We could not stop our complicated civilization all along the line by the hour hand of the watch without working unexpected harm.

No doubt there is much unnecessary work done on the Sabbath and we are more in danger of undue laxness than of strictness, but in determining its necessities and its freedom we must be governed by broad humanities.

4. The Sabbath Made for Man

Jesus now penetrated deeper into the matter and laid open the basal principle of the Sabbath. "But if ye had known what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the

guiltless." On another occasion (Matt. 9:14) Jesus quoted this same Scripture to the Pharisees and they were continually missing its point.

Its application in this connection is that the Sabbath is a day of mercy and not a hard ordinance to which the needs of man must be adapted.

Jesus expressed the same thought in the saying given in Mark 2:27, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The day fits into human needs and matches man as the air fills the lungs and the light matches the eye.

The Sabbath is a mercy to man in that it gives him regular rest from toil.

Were it not for its gracious presence and protection, the wheels of industry would never cease to turn and life would be an endless round and grind of toil, as in heathen countries.

It is also a beneficent minister to the higher needs of man.

He needs rest from the excitement and worry of life; he needs to be still that he may look into his heart and see what manner of man he is; above all, he needs worship, forgiveness for sin and fellowship with the Father and eternal life. The day was made to meet these needs and it may fill them full.

But man was not made for the Sabbath: man is the end and the Sabbath is the means; man is greater than the day and its observance must be subordinated to his needs.

The coat must be cut to fit the man, and not the man cut to fit the coat.

The Pharisees wanted the Sabbath to be kept though men should be starved; and any theory of observance that makes the keeping of the day more important than the welfare of men repeats this mistake.

But though the Sabbath was made for man and is subordinate to him, yet it was not made for him to destroy.

Wheat fields were made for man, but not for him to burn up. The fact that the Sabbath was made for man imposes upon him the obligation to use it well. We cannot break the cup and keep the water.

We cannot have the Sabbath day unless we keep the day of the Sabbath.

It is significant that it was on the first day of the week or the new Christian Sabbath or Lord's day that the risen Jesus stood in the midst of the disciples and quieted them by saying, " Peace be unto you."

Every day but especially on the day of worship he still stands in our midst and bids us experience this same gracious blessing.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Are all the Ten Commandments still binding upon us?
2. In what ways may the spirit of the Pharisees still be in us?
3. What are now some of the most common forms of violating the Sabbath?
4. To what extent may we indulge in recreation on this day?
5. What are some ways in which we may turn this day into delight?

LESSON XII—MARCH 24

Stewardship and Missions

Lesson: Genesis 12:1–3; Deuteronomy 8:17–18; Jonah 3:1–10; Malachi 3:7–12; Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:6–8; 13:1–3; 26:12–20; Romans 1:14–16; I Corinthians 16:2; II Corinthians 8:1–15; 9:1–15.

Golden Text: It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. I Corinthians 4:2.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 96:1–8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What it is to be a Steward.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Stewardship of Self, Substance and Service.

Lesson Text: Acts 1:6–8; II Corinthians 8:1–9

6 They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority.

8 But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia;

2 How that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches for their liberality.

3 For according to their power, I bear witness, yea and beyond their power, *they gave* of their own accord,

4 Beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints:

5 And *this*, not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us through the will of God.

6 Insomuch that we exhorted Titus, that as he had made a beginning before, so he would also complete in you this grace also.

7 But as ye abound in everything, *in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all earnestness, and *in* your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by way of commandment, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity also of your love.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The World Enterprise of Missions.

2. The Liberality of the Macedonians.

3. Giving the Self to the Lord.
4. The Same Grace Commended to the Corinthians.
5. The Example of the Lord Jesus.

Stewardship and missions go together as the two hands by which we carry on the great commission of our Lord in building his kingdom in the world.

Stewardship is our trusteeship by which we are put in charge of all our goods to use them in the interest of the great Proprietor, owner of heaven and earth.

Missions is the process of sending the gospel out over the world.

Missions has its business side, for it takes money to pay its bills at every step. It is a worldwide enterprise and is therefore big business that calls for large expenditures.

Stewardship provides this money.

It holds all our possessions in trust and we are to administer this trust in accordance with the will of our Lord and the welfare of his work. Money is the means and in no small degree is the measure of this work.

We may hinder and hamper the work by withholding from it the support which it needs and which we could give, for by greater liberality we can give it wings to fly to the utmost ends of the earth.

1. The World Enterprise of Missions

The first and most vital need of missions are witnesses of the grace and power of the gospel, living examples of what it can do and has done in saving people.

In this work it is important that we understand the nature of the kingdom we are setting out to build.

This was a point hard for the disciples to understand. In the last days after the resurrection they asked Jesus, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?"

The question might have been the largest and noblest they could have put, but their narrow minds had contracted and degraded it into the smallest and lowest.

"Kingdom" meant very different things to the disciples and to the Master: they meant by it a splendid material kingdom with Jerusalem as mistress of the world and themselves in the chief offices; he meant by it a spiritual kingdom of righteousness and peace in the hearts of men with himself as servant of all.

They never could break through their Jewish narrowness and materialism into Christ's breadth and spirituality; and here, after three years of training, just before they were to be sent out to spread the kingdom, they relapsed into Jewish grossness and selfishness. It was very discouraging.

But Jesus was patient and tender with them and gave them a reply marked with marvelous wisdom.

He did not too abruptly shatter their dream, but turned their minds off from it with the large principle that times and seasons were hidden from them.

There are some things God must not tell us.

Too much light blinds the eye; too much fuel smothers the fire; too much knowledge would paralyze us and disorganize the world. It is a mercy to us that the future is mostly curtained from our view.

Persistent prying into times and seasons is harmful and sinful, and secret things are wisely left with God.

Having deflected their minds off from their materialistic ambition, Jesus gradually bent their thoughts back to the spiritual kingdom of the Holy Spirit and to their mission as witnesses. They were to have in their world campaign no power of the sword with which Rome had swept its empire over the world, but the Holy Spirit would come upon them and by the gentle persuasion of his truth and grace they would win their way.

They were to begin at Jerusalem, right at home where our work always begins, and their work was to widen out in concentric circles through Judea—home missions, and Samaria—crossing over into foreign missions, until it belted the globe and filled the whole earth with the glad tidings and glory of the Lord.

The kingdom of God is great and grand enough to stimulate and satisfy our loftiest ambition and we are to keep pushing it forward until it everywhere touches and fills the rim of the planet.

2. The Liberality of the Macedonians

Our lesson passes from the kingdom to the subject of money without giving us any jarring sense of incongruity, for money has spiritual affinities and is religious.

In the church as in the world money is a motive power and makes the gospel go.

Money is a constant crying need, and the lack of it one of the greatest hindrances, in our Christian work. How to get money perplexes and hampers all our boards and agencies.

The same difficulties that embarrass us beset the early churches, and in this lesson we find Paul wrestling with the money question.

The early Christians were generally poor, and those at Jerusalem, where at this period "hard times" were terribly severe, were in pitiful distress. The bond of brotherhood among these persecuted Christians was strong and tender, and they made noble efforts to help one another.

The spirit that has dotted Christendom with hospitals and asylums and charity organizations was at work in a world that knew not such things.

Paul, after leaving Ephesus, where he had written his First Epistle to the Corinthians, passed over into Macedonia, where he gathered contributions for the poor at Jerusalem. While in Macedonia he wrote this Second Epistle to the Corinthians in which he urges the same duty upon them. It was the self-sacrificing liberality of these poor Macedonians that moved Paul to appeal to the richer Corinthians to do likewise, which illustrates the power of example and of unconscious influence.

The liberality of the Macedonians was a fruit of the grace of God.

In conversion the pocketbook must go along with the man that owns it. These Macedonians did not plead their poverty as an excuse for withholding any contribution, or urge that their gifts were so small that they would be of no account.

Giving is not the exclusive duty of the rich, but rests equally on the poor.

The poor owe the duty and need the discipline of giving as well as the rich, and in God's treasury the poor widow's mite may count for

as much as the rich man's bank bill or large check. The Macedonians gave up to and even beyond the measure of their ability. They did not try to see how little they could give, but how much. Their generous souls were larger than their narrow means; their sympathies outran their abilities. With us it is often the other way: our purses are larger than our souls; our narrow sympathies contract and shut up our broad means.

The stringency that causes such a dearth in our Christian work is not in the money market, but in the hearts of Christians.

If we were as liberal in giving to God as God is in giving to us, his treasury would be full to overflowing.

3. Giving the Self to the Lord

The Macedonians gave as an act of fellowship with the saints. They never had seen these poor Christians in Jerusalem, and had no personal acquaintance with them, but they felt the ties of spiritual kinship that bound Macedonia and Jerusalem together.

Christianity widens out the sense of brotherhood and fellowship so as to take in all men.

It knows no distinctions of race or class or climate; its sense of brotherhood does not stop with red and blue lines on the map. We owe to every human being a gift as our brother, especially the highest gift of the gospel.

These Macedonians "first gave their own selves to the Lord." That was the secret of all their giving, the root out of which this noble generosity grew and blossomed. When the center of the circle moves, every point on the circumference moves with it.

When a man gives himself to the Lord everything that belongs to him goes with him.

The best gift we can give to others is not money, but self, personal sympathy and helpfulness; and the greatest gift we can give to God is our own selves. He wants this gift first, for when he gets this he will easily get all things else.

We have doubtless moved ahead of these Macedonians in many points, but we have not yet caught up with them in one point—the grace of liberality.

No wonder their unselfish generosity deeply touched Paul and moved him to wish that the same spirit might possess all his churches.

4. The Same Grace Commended to the Corinthians

Paul now desired that the same grace of liberality might be completed in the Corinthians. What was grace in Macedonia was grace also in Corinth.

Grace is not subject to longitude and latitude, country and climate, but like the atmosphere goes everywhere and has the same nature and virtue.

The gospel brings forth the same fruits under every sky and everywhere works grace. Paul had sent Titus to Corinth (12:18), who had begun to stir up the Corinthians on the duty of liberality, and now, as he was about to return, Paul hoped that he would be able to complete the work.

It is not enough to begin a work of Christian grace; it must be carried to completion.

As the Corinthians abounded in other graces, so Paul urged them to abound in this grace also. Paul, who was always the soul of kindness and courtesy, was careful, before calling their attention to the virtue in which they were deficient, to commend them for the grace in which they abounded.

The first duty of a critic is to see good points and commend them.

This puts him in pleasant relations with those whose faults may be pointed out and prepares the way for helpful correction.

These Corinthians had faith, utterance, knowledge, earnestness, and love, five splendid Christian graces, but these were not enough.

A man might have all these in some degree and still be stingy and mean. No number of virtues are enough so long as any one virtue is missing. A watch may have many wheels and springs and jewels and be beautiful to the eye, and yet, lacking one wheel, may be useless for keeping time.

One sin makes a sinner, but one grace does not make a saint.

Christian character is built on lines of symmetry, every grace in its place. There are many one-sided, ill-proportioned Christians.

It is easy to have a few virtues in a high degree of perfection; the difficult thing is to have all virtues in their due proportion and harmony.

The Christian ideal is to attain unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

5. The Example of the Lord Jesus

Paul desired to test the love of the Corinthians by their liberality. The Corinthians professed love for Paul, and for the brethren, and for God.

Here was a chance to prove profession by performance.

Mere talk is cheap, it is deeds that count. If no charities come out of a man, there is no charity in him. We can tell what is in us by what is coming out of us.

The sincerity and force and worth of character are shown and tested by the conduct that grows out of it.

Paul appeals to the illustrious example of the Lord Jesus as an incentive to the Corinthians. He was rich with all the ineffable glories of heaven, yet for our sakes he emptied himself, that we through his poverty might be rich.

This is the central wonder and eternal glory of the gospel.

God asks no virtue of us that does not shine in splendor out of his own character.

Christ stands as our ideal at every point.

He asks us to give ourselves to him and to love others, but he first loved us and gave himself for us. To be a Christian is to have this same mind in us.

As the Corinthians had shown some readiness or willingness to give, Paul now urges them to perform the act. The Corinthians had made a start in the matter of this contribution for the poor at Jerusalem before the Macedonians, but they had fallen behind while the Macedonians had pushed ahead. Paul urges them to come up to the full performance of what they had begun.

There appears to have been some indication of Corinthian fickleness in this matter, and Paul broadly hints at it.

There is danger of starting in a work too ardently and impetuously and then cooling off and slowing down.

How often this happens with our good intentions, and especially with reference to our giving to the Lord's work, and we should count the cost before we start, and make preparation and form a resolution that will carry us all the way through. It is not enough to say that we are willing to give or to work for Christ: we must do the work itself.

By such liberality the work of missions in its world-wide enterprise will be worthily financed and like a mighty army will move the church of God on its grand march.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of how extensive is the work of Christian missions in the world.
2. What is your denomination doing in this work?
3. What is your congregation doing in it?
4. Has our Christian giving kept pace with our national growth in wealth?
5. How can we learn to delight in giving?

LESSON XIII—MARCH 31

The Future Life (Easter Lesson)

Lesson: Matthew 25:31–46; Mark 12:26–27; Luke 24:1–12; John 14:1–6; I Corinthians 15:3–20, 50–58; I Thessalonians 4:13–18; Revelation 22:1–5.

Golden Text: Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. Revelation 2:10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Living Here and Hereafter.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Our Ground of Hope for the Future.

Lesson Text: Luke 24:1–12; John 14:1–6

1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came unto the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared.

2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it came to pass, while they were perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel:

5 And as they were affrighted and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

7 Saying that the Son of man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

8 And they remembered his words.

9 And returned from the tomb, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest.

10 Now they were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the *mother* of James: and the other women with them told these things unto the apostles.

11 And these words appeared in their sight as idle talk; and they disbelieved them.

12 But Peter arose, and ran unto the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths by themselves; and he departed to his home, wondering at that which was come to pass.

1 Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me.

2 In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

4 And whither I go, ye know the way.

5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Spices for the Body of Jesus.

2. The Empty Tomb.

3. Believing Women and Scoffing Disciples.
4. Peter Investigates.
5. Many Mansions.

The resurrection of Christ is the central column of the gospel on which its whole structure rests. No resurrection means no divine Christ, but a risen Jesus means a mighty Saviour. No one saw Jesus rise, but many saw him risen.

The gospel narratives pour around this event a blaze of light such as illuminates no other miracle in the Bible.

It stands established by many infallible proofs. Easter again brings us to this day that we may stand in its light and rejoice in its faith and hope.

1. Spices for the Body of Jesus

The morning opens with the faithful women, who were last at the cross, first at the tomb. What were they doing there? They had bought spices and brought them to anoint the body of Jesus.

This loving act has immense significance as showing the state of mind of these women and of all the disciples after the crucifixion.

They believed that Jesus was dead and had no hope or thought of his resurrection. They were utterly bewildered, scattered and crushed and supposed that all was over. They were in no condition of mind, then, to invent or imagine a resurrection, and any theory of fraud or vision on the part of the disciples is a psychological impossibility.

This is incidental and undesigned but strong confirmation of the reality of this event.

On their way to the sepulcher the women had wondered how the stone that closed it could be removed, but when they reached it they found it rolled away. An earthquake had shaken it loose and left the rocky jaws of the tomb standing open for the risen Jesus to slip through.

When the women entered the tomb they "found not the body of the Lord Jesus." Other tombs are held dear because they hold precious dust, or they are famous and draw visitors from far lands because they contain the remains of genius, but this tomb derives its vast significance from the fact that it was empty.

Other bodies are put in the grave and stay there, but this one could not be "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd," but rose again. And because this tomb was empty, other tombs at last shall be empty also.

2. The Empty Tomb

The angels that thronged around the earth at the birth of Jesus again appear at his resurrection.

There are some things that human lips must not be permitted to tell; they must not announce the birth of Jesus or his resurrection from the dead.

These messages are too momentous to be entrusted to earthly messengers. Let a choir of shining angels from the gallery of the sky sing the glad tidings of the first Christmas morning, and on the first Easter morning let angels clothed in white enter the tomb of the risen Christ and explain to a wondering world why that tomb is empty.

The women were affrighted, as men of the stoutest nerves would have been, but the angels announced, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" These women unwittingly classed the living Christ with the dead, and may we not make the same mistake? When we think of him purely as an historical person we forget and miss his living presence.

Let us never think of Christ as dead and try to wrap him in the cerements of the grave, but always remember that he is alive forevermore.

"He is not here, but is risen," was the triumphant reason given by the angels why that tomb was empty.

What became of that body if Jesus did not rise?

The story of the resurrection soon threw the priests into a panic, and they could have produced the body, over which they had placed their own guard, if it had been there.

The tomb was empty because its temporary occupant had left it.

His resurrection was in accordance with his own prediction. "Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee." His death was no unforeseen calamity that fell upon him and cut short his work, but it was part of his purpose and was built into his plan from

before the foundation of the world. The resurrection was the completion and crown of this plan and was provided and foreseen from the beginning.

He who could thus predict his own resurrection is to be trusted in all his promises, even when he declares, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live."

3. Believing Women and Scoffing Disciples

The women "remembered his words," and their faith in him had a new birth.

That we should remember the words of the Lord Jesus is a Scripture admonition to which we should give constant heed.

Forgetting his words lets us slip into doubt and discouragement, but holding on to his promises keeps us strong and steady in faith.

The women "returned from the tomb, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest." Having received the good news they immediately began to impart it to others.

From the empty tomb of the risen Christ the first believers in his resurrection sped away to publish the wonderful tidings, and we, having received the same good news, must pass it on and keep it flying until it reaches the ends of the earth.

The good news, however, encountered strange unbelief. "And these words appeared in their sight as idle talk; and they disbelieved them." Who were these first unbelievers in the resurrection? Jewish priests and Roman officers? No, but "the apostles." Peter and James and John and all of the eleven believed the story of these women was some hallucination of their excited minds, "idle talk;" "the wild talk of sick delirium," as the Greek word is applied in medical language, a usage with which Luke as a physician would be familiar.

Again we have here a strong incidental confirmation of the truthfulness of this narrative and of the reality of this event.

Any inventor of such a story would never have put into it the unbelief of these disciples in the resurrection, but would have represented them as unanimous and enthusiastic believers in it from the beginning. But the fact that these writers recorded this disbelief of the disciples is strong evidence that they were simply telling the truth.

So the unbelief of the disciples sets their conversion in the light of strong proof and confirms our faith.

4. Peter Investigates

Peter was one of the first disciples to discover the truth. He at first disbelieved the report as idle talk and, likely enough, was one of the loudest scoffers.

But he did not rest in his unbelief.

Presently he fell into a more sober mood and then he began to think the matter was worth looking into. He is counted in with those that "disbelieved," "but Peter arose and ran unto the tomb."

This discloses Peter in an honest spirit of inquiry and investigation.

He disbelieved, but he was willing to know the truth. He did not assume that there could be no resurrection and settle the case by a theory spun out of his own mind, but he set about finding the facts.

And he did not go to consult with priests and officers who were hostile to Jesus and to a resurrection, but he started straight for that tomb. He was going to investigate this matter at its source and have first-hand knowledge of it. In his impetuosity he ran, for if there was any truth in this report he wanted to know it quickly.

Doubts concerning the resurrection of Christ may trouble us sorely, and such doubts may not be blameworthy. But they become blameworthy when we rest in them and cherish them.

There is a way out of them, and the way is to go straight to Christ. We must get closer to him and come into personal acquaintance with him, if we would know the truth in this matter.

How did the case come out with Peter? "And stooping down and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths by themselves." Those grave-clothes were evidence to him that Jesus was indeed risen, and his unbelief now gave way to mighty faith that mastered him to the end of his days. "And he departed to his home, wondering at that which was come to pass."

This is what comes of honest investigation and looking the facts fairly in the face.

Had Peter cherished his unbelief, his first hastily formed impression might have hardened into prejudice and pride of opinion that never would have changed. But his visit to that tomb opened his eyes and showed him wondrous things that dissipated his doubt and filled his soul with glowing faith and love.

A reverent study of the facts that we find in connection with the empty tomb of Jesus is a path out of doubt into faith.

If we will candidly consider the mass and the momentum, the convergence and the convincingness of the evidence for the resurrection of Christ, we shall surely be filled with wonder that will grow into worship.

5. Comfort for the Troubled

The fact of the resurrection of Christ is full of comfort, the sorest need of our human world, and Jesus himself turned it to this use in his table talk with the disciples on the fateful evening preceding the crucifixion.

"Let not your heart be troubled," is the fundamental theme that interweaves itself through all the strains and chords of this grand symphony, the melodic germ that blooms into all this matchless music.

Sorrow must pour itself out in grief and tears, the wounded heart must bleed. The Bible is not an iron book that would crush our feelings into insensibility. Yet the soul in sorrow should not be lashed and torn like an angry sea, but should possess itself in patience, and its central depths should be filled with peace.

Jesus gives profound and powerful reasons for this untroubled heart.

"Believe in God" is the tonic note of this comfort. When we know that God reigns we know that no atom can ever slip out of its place and that all things work together for good to them that love him. "Believe also in me" is the second chord, growing out of and completing the first. Jesus comforts troubled hearts by drawing them into sympathy with himself and enfolding them in the Fatherhood of God.

Trust God and trust Jesus—this is the cure for all our trials and sorrows, a song in the night that can sing and soothe our troubled hearts into peace.

6. Many Mansions

The Master now wove this primal faith into triumphal chords of hope. "In my Father's house are many mansions." He opens a door into the other world and shows us that it is not a dark void where our conscious life is lost in oblivion, but a many-roomed, many-storied house, a grand mansion where our Father makes his home.

If this were not so, Jesus would have told us, for he always told the truth.

Would he leave us under any delusion on so vital a hope as the future life? No, his whole life and character are pledged to tell us the truth on this point, and here we can trust him.

A wonderfully suggestive promise is his pledge that he has gone to prepare a place for us.

He has gone to prepare this place and so he is still at work. Heaven is not a place of eternal idleness and stagnation, but of intense activities where all powers are urged to the utmost and the mightiest plans are being carried on and where God himself is busy and ever doing his best.

Jesus has gone to prepare this place for us—then he is still our servant, still is the Lord of creation building a home and laying up his treasures for us. How richly will this place be furnished after it has had lavished upon it the wealth of Christ's wisdom and power and felt the finishing touch of his hand? Since this earthly world has been builded so grandly and sculptured and painted so richly and splendidly, what a world of grandeur and splendor and beauty will not that heavenly place be where the redeemed dwell through eternity with the spirits of just men made perfect and with Jesus?

All this is wrapped up in this Easter fact and day. Had Jesus not risen his name would have been buried under the dust of the ages, and our human world would have been left in the dark as to a future life: but his resurrection has let loose a flood of light to disperse the night of death and let us see through the gates into the eternal morning.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. When did Jesus first speak of his resurrection to his disciples?
2. Why were they so slow to believe in it?
3. Why were the women quicker to believe in the resurrection than men?
4. Why do we believe in immortality?
5. What effect would the loss of faith in immortality have on our life?

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND QUARTER

One of the great historical works in English is Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* It is a grand survey of the mighty empire that flung its boundary around the known world and it pictures its slow decline and final fall after half a millennium. In this Quarter we witness the decline and fall of a still more ancient nation. While the small and obscure kingdom of Judah will not compare in size and splendor with Rome, yet it may be not less significant in its moral and spiritual value.

Mere physical mass does not measure spiritual weight and worth, and the people of Judah had ideals and visions that lifted them above the level of their time and still raise the level of the world.

This people, also, had their prophets or men of lofty spiritual vision, and without such men the people perish.

The two leading prophets of this time were Isaiah and Jeremiah. Isaiah was a man of religious genius, sensitive to the things of the spirit, who stood on a lofty summit of vision and caught the light of God and reflected it down upon his day. He lived in a dark and hard time for a prophet and had to speak plain things to a degenerate people, and this he did with unflinching bravery and piercing speech.

Jeremiah was a man of different temperament but not less noble and courageous as a prophet. He lived in still more distressful times than Isaiah and was caught in the coils and shared the fate of Jerusalem when it was besieged and captured by the Babylonians, and he disappeared in its tragic fate.

This history is ancient and yet it is surprisingly modern in its political principles and moral and spiritual lessons.

The unity of history must always impress its student and any ancient page holds a mirror up to our own time.

We should study the subject of this and the next Quarter, "Prophetic Teaching and Leadership of Judah," not only as interesting in itself and as an early chapter in the whole story of redemption, but also as a continuous illustration and application of the principles that underlie and rule our day and life.

SECOND QUARTER

PROPHETIC TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP OF JUDAH

FROM ISAIAH TO THE EXILE

(First Half of a Six-months' Course)

Aim: To lead the pupils in discovering and appreciating how God, through the prophets and other leaders, gave help and guidance to the people of Judah, in order that the pupils may come to see the hand of God in their own lives and in all human affairs.

LESSON I—APRIL 7

The Ministry of Isaiah

Lesson: Isaiah 6:1–13; 7:1–17; 20:1–6; 38:1–22.

Golden Text: Then said I, Here am I; send me. Isaiah 6:8.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 116:12–19.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Finding a Life Work.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Obedient to the Heavenly Vision.

Lesson Text: Isaiah 6:1–8; 20:1–2; 38:1–5

1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple.

2 Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar;

7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven.

8 And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.

1 In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it;

2 At that time Jehovah spake by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put thy shoe from off thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

1 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.

2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto Jehovah,

3 And said, Remember now, O Jehovah, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

4 Then came the word of Jehovah to Isaiah, saying,

5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***A Splendid Vision.***
2. ***A Man of Unclean Lips.***
3. ***Unclean Lips Cleansed.***
4. ***A Call to Service.***
5. ***The Prophet Ministers to a King.***

Isaiah was the greatest of the Hebrew prophet-preachers. He lived in Jerusalem and his ministry extended through the reigns of four kings and a period of sixty years. He began in the reign of Uzziah when Judah was enjoying a high degree of material prosperity.

This outward splendor, however, was only thin gilding that concealed inward corruption, and the unfaithful nation was already staggering towards its fall.

Isaiah saw the falseness and rottenness of prince and priest and people and spared them not. In the first five chapters of his book he holds up the mirror to his time and shows us the terrible reflection.

The last part of the third chapter is a perfect picture of modern fashion and frivolity and falsity, and the whole discourse has a modern tone and squarely strikes the sins of to-day.

Through these clouds of guilt shoot lightning flashes of wrath and retribution. In the sixth chapter the prophet gives us his divine call, the heavenly vision which, like that of Paul, transformed his life and inspired him for heroic service and suffering.

1. A Splendid Vision

Isaiah saw his vision in the temple. That is a good place to see visions. Down in the dust and clamor of the market, out in the whirl of society we are not likely to see any ideal that will transfigure life.

But in the house of worship messages are heard and aspirations are kindled that lift us far above this world and give life new meaning.

The prophet saw the Lord upon his throne, his rightful place, where he always has been and will be, the central and supreme Ruler of the world. His train filled the temple, the royal robes of his glory flowed from him and filled the place. Seraphim hovered around him, veiling their feet and faces with two pairs of wings to express their reverence and to shield themselves from the intolerable splendor and using a third pair to fly as ministering spirits everywhere at the divine bidding.

Man is the top of this world, but not of all worlds: far above him in the unseen are bright spirits that flock close to the throne of God and burn with glory.

What was the character of this mysterious Person the prophet saw so exalted and splendid? On this everything depends. "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

Holy character—that is his true crown of glory; now let him reign; the universe is safe.

Infinite wisdom, power and splendor, add these up and they do not make God; add love, and still the sum is incomplete; add justice and truth, holiness of character, and now we have God. This was the vision the prophet saw that lifted him up to a new plane of being and transfigured his life.

Low and poor and barren is the life that has no vision to lift it up and idealize it; and lofty and strong and rich is the life that has caught such a vision and is carried up on its wings.

2. A Man of Unclean Lips

The prophet was instantly smitten with a sense of sin. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." He did not go out from the vision filled with pride and vanity because of what

he had seen, boasting of his experience, exalting himself over others by his special privilege, but he humbled himself in the dust.

This is the proper effect of superior privilege and power anywhere, but especially in the presence of God.

It is an awful thing to see the holy God and Father of us all, and then look with pride and scorn upon our fellowmen.

Why was the prophet seized with a sense of sin? No word of condemnation had been spoken to him, the Lord had not cast upon him an angry glance, not the least allusion had been made to his lips that now seemed clogged with uncleanness. "For mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts," was the reason.

The mere vision of Jehovah had made his sense of sin vivid, the splendor of the divine holiness had revealed and intensified the spots and stains of his human guilt.

In the night all discolorations and defects are concealed: the sun brings them to light and discloses their deformity. We need only step into the presence of God and become vividly conscious of the whiteness of his holiness to see how stained and saturated with sin we are.

In the presence of Jesus no word of condemnation need be spoken, our own heart condemns us, and we can only cry, "God, be thou merciful to me a sinner."

3. Unclean Lips Cleansed

How was the prophet's cry received? Did a holy angel smite him down or a flash of the Lord's anger consume him? No, swift as a beam of light a seraph flew with a burning coal from the altar, and touching the prophet's mouth with it, said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thy iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven." The prophet's sin was not denied or palliated: his guilty conscience told him the truth; he was not fit for that holy presence.

Yet he was not dealt with severely and driven out of the temple, but his penitential guilt was forgiven and burned away.

His unclean lips were cleansed and made vocal with holiness. The prophet was here so close to God that the intermediary ritual of the temple was done away and the cleansing fire was applied directly to

his lips. God is a consuming fire against sin, and yet if we are penitent his fire will burn away our sin and leave us unharmed but purified.

All that stay in his presence must be assimilated into the likeness of his holiness, and the blood of Jesus Christ will work this blessed change in us.

The prophet's lips were the means of his ministry, and there it seemed to him that all his guilt was congested, and therefore they were cleansed. The lips are a true and full expression of the whole nature; there our guilt gathers and finds an outlet, and there it must be cleansed away. Few habits are more vile than foul speech, few sins worse than unclean lips.

No habit is so significant of good character and is a more beautiful accomplishment than pure and choice speech.

"If any man stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also." "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in network of silver."

4. A Call to Service

The prophet now heard a voice calling for volunteers for service. "And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

The Lord calls human beings to go for him and do his work, the Creator needs the creature, Omnipotence needs the help of finite weakness.

The steam must have its cylinder, the river is its channel, and the lightning the conducting wire. "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations." God has many tasks waiting to be done, in the field and factory, in business and in the professions, in the home and school and church, in the great work of building his kingdom in the world, and to this service we are called. We are not drafted into servitude, but are called as volunteers into free service.

The whole world stands only half built against the sky and its vast unfinished task is a challenge to us to lay hold of it and carry it forward and upward.

We shall not see the top stone laid and hear the final shout and anthem of praise at the glorious completion of the kingdom, but if we

are faithful now as we work far down on the walls and possibly deep down in the foundations we shall have a part in that glory and our voice shall join in that song.

Immediately after he was pardoned and purified Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord and was given a work to do, and it will not be long after we have experienced pardoning grace that we shall hear the call to service. One must have his hearing dulled with worldliness and sin that cannot hear this call in this great day of service, but the purified soul hears it clear and strong.

" Here am I; send me," instantly answered the prophet. His vibrant soul answered quick and clear as a struck bell.

All great souls wear this mark of unquestioning obedience, going out not knowing whither they go.

Not until we simply hear the voice of the Lord and commit ourselves to his path shall we find power and patience and peace. We are saved to serve, and only in our service shall we find our mission and reap the full reward of the Christian life.

And so the grand vision Isaiah saw in the temple was transmuted into lowly service in doing the Lord's will in that wicked city.

Every vision is to be turned into a victory.

It sets before us a star to lead and lure us on and lift us up so that we are urged and inspired to stretch every nerve that may reach the ideal and turn it into reality. This is the true test and measure of the reality and worth of a heavenly vision: what effect does it have upon our daily life, is it turned into victory over our temptations and transmuted into finer character and more victorious faith and faithfulness?

The most splendid vision that ever swept through our brain or burned in our sky is an empty delusion if it does not transform us into its own heavenly likeness and bear the fruits of better living and help to make a better world.

5. The Prophet Ministers to a King

We next find an instance of the kind of service Isaiah was called upon to do. King Hezekiah lay ill with a severe affliction and pain wracked his body. Those in high places are not exempt from the common ills of life.

The prophet went to see the king as a physician, for originally prophet and physician were combined in one person, and still the minister to the spirit can also minister to the body. The prophet spoke plainly to the king as to his condition. "Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live."

Should a dangerously ill person always be thus informed of his condition?

The question cannot be answered by a general rule, and the advice of the physician should be considered. There are cases in which such information might aggravate the disease and increase danger and even cause death. But in general sick persons should know something of their condition, especially if they need to set their house in order. The matter of making a will is often one of vital importance to the family, and often has great distress resulted because this was not attended to. The danger from imparting such information to the sick is probably less than is supposed. Albert Barnes out of his long pastoral experience testified that "There is no danger to be apprehended from communicating to the sick their true condition. It should be done tenderly, and with affection, but it should be done faithfully. I have had many opportunities of witnessing the effect of apprising the sick of their situation, and of the moral certainty that they must die; and I cannot now recall an instance in which the announcement has had any unhappy effect on the disease. Often, on the contrary, the effect is to lead the dying to look up to God, and peacefully repose on him. Nothing is more favorable for a recovery than a calm submission to God."

Every one should have his house set in order whether on a bed of sickness or in the strength of health.

One's business matters should be in such shape that he can leave them; and much more should one's spiritual affairs be in such condition that at any time he can appear before God with joy and not with fear.

The king prayed earnestly to God and his prayer was heard and his life extended. We have a right to pray to God for deliverance from illness, even when we believe that death is at the door, and he can order all things so as to give further life.

Jehovah went further in his answer and assured Hezekiah that his

city would be delivered out of the hand of the Assyrian. The great matters of the world, its international affairs, all its kings and kingdoms are in his hand and he can bring them to pass.

God is the true defense of a nation and city. Not in armies and warships should we put our trust, but in the Lord our God and in that righteousness that exalteth a nation.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What was the office of a prophet?
2. What were some of the characteristics of Isaiah as a prophet?
3. Of what other visions do we read in the Scriptures?
4. How can we distinguish between a true vision and an idle fancy?
5. What are some of the great visions that men have seen?

LESSON II—APRIL 14

Hezekiah Leads His People Back to God

Lesson: II Chronicles 30:1–27.

Golden Text: Jehovah your God is gracious and merciful. II Chronicles 30:9.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 145:8–17.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: A Leader with a High Purpose.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Influence of a Good Leader.

Lesson Text: II Chronicles 30:1–9, 25–27

1 And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto Jehovah, the God of Israel.

2 For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the assembly in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month.

3 For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient number, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.

4 And the thing was right in the eyes of the king and of all the assembly.

5 So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem: for they had not kept it in great numbers in such sort as it is written.

6 So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may return to the remnant that are escaped of you out of the hand of the kings of Assyria.

7 And be not ye like your fathers and like your brethren, who trespassed against Jehovah, the God of their fathers, so that he gave them up to desolation, as ye see.

8 Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were; but yield yourselves unto Jehovah, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever, and serve Jehovah your God, that his fierce anger may turn away from you.

9 For if ye turn again unto Jehovah, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that led them captive, and shall come again into this land: for Jehovah your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.

25 And all the assembly of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the assembly that came out of Israel, and the sojourners that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced.

26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.

27 Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy habitation, even unto heaven.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *An Attempt to Get Together.*
2. *Better Late Than Never.*
3. *An Ancient Postal Delivery.*
4. *A Scorned Invitation and a Rejoicing People.*

Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah when it was at its lowest point of spiritual degradation. Ahaz, his father, had made molten images of Baal and had burnt his own children in dreadful heathen sacrifice. He rifled the temple of its treasures and finally shut up its doors. The public worship of Jehovah ceased in Jerusalem, and heathen altars were set up in every corner of the city. Throughout all the cities of the land, also, altars smoked with idolatrous sacrifice. True religion had seemingly perished in Judah, and the God of Israel was forgotten.

It was in these circumstances that Hezekiah began to reign at the age of twenty-five years. He was one of those rare cases, a good son coming of a bad father. His mother's name, Abijah (My father is Jehovah), may contain some explanation of his training and character.

Whenever on the pages of history, whether sacred or profane, we find a good man, we may look in the background for a good mother. "A good mother," said George Herbert, "is worth a hundred schoolmasters."

1. An Attempt to Get Together

Hezekiah began his reign by reviving the worship of Jehovah. A remarkable feature of the movement was that the king "sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come." Judah and Israel had now been separated for more than two hundred years and had just recently been at war, in which Judah suffered a terrible defeat; yet the new king of Judah included Israel in his invitation and took special measures to secure their attendance.

Hezekiah was a man of broad views.

He saw that things were going from bad to worse in both kingdoms and that these separated brethren should be unified in the worship of their common ancestral God. The temple was "the house of Jehovah"

to them all, and he would signalize the beginning of his reign by a grand recognition of this fact.

The first step that separated brethren should take towards reformation and revival is to get together.

Members of the same family or church or nation that are divided through alienation and strife need expect no blessing; the same state of heart that separates them from one another will also separate them from God.

Let them come together in unity and peace, and the same spirit that draws them together will draw them to their common Father.

Both Judah and Israel were invited to " come to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem." The house of the Lord is a common mercy-seat where all divided hearts should meet. There all differences should disappear and melt into one mind.

They were " to keep the passover unto Jehovah, the God of Israel." The passover pointed back to that great deliverance which was the Declaration of Independence of the chosen people, the pole-star of their national life and the mighty proof of God's power and favor.

This appeal touched a deep common chord in their history and consciousness and woke music that had long been silent.

Hezekiah tried to hitch his wagon to this splendid star in their history so as to draw the whole nation after it. When we are divided we should seek to revive tender and powerful common memories and interests that draw and bind us together.

The passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is a mighty deliverance that stands back of us and, as we think of it, all our divisions and strifes should vanish and we should be merged into one mind and heart.

2. Better Late Than Never

The appointed time for the passover was the fourteenth day of the first month, and this day was now past, so that the ordinance could not be observed at the proper time.

Why had it not been kept?

" Because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient number, neither had the people gathered themselves together at

Jerusalem." There was here a dereliction of duty, beginning with the priests and spreading down through the people. When ordinances are neglected and the church pews are empty and religion is declining, somebody has not sanctified himself.

Probably the trouble begins in the pulpit, and the people also have been in fault.

It was a ceremonial cleansing that these people had failed to observe, but we need to see to it that our hearts are cleansed from all unrighteousness.

What was done about this failure?

Because the proper time was passed, was there no observance of the passover at all? No, "for the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the assembly in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month." In the eighteenth verse it is also stated that they did "eat the passover otherwise than it is written."

The passover was very strictly defined and rigidly limited in the time and mode of its observance in the book of the law. Yet here these requirements were relaxed and the ordinance was observed "otherwise than it is written."

This shows that the Jews far back in the days when they were bound down under such strict ceremonial law knew that the mere letter killeth and that it is the spirit that giveth life.

When they could not keep the ordinance according to the letter, they relaxed the letter and fulfilled its spirit. Ordinances are only means to a spiritual end and must not be allowed to obstruct it. They must be kept plastic so as to bend to their purpose.

The mere time and mode of worship are never so vital as the worship itself and may be adapted to circumstances.

Yet this adaptability of ordinances does not give us the liberty of license to modify or dismiss them at our pleasure. They are still divinely appointed and are not to be treated as mere matters of opinion and taste. Their usefulness depends in some degree upon their being regular and rigid in their time and mode, and these should be respected.

These Jews, because "they had not kept it in great numbers in such sort as it is written," did not let the passover lapse altogether, but they repented of their neglect and restored it to its proper place. They let the first month pass, but they seized the second month.

Better late than never. If we have been neglecting any duty, then let us seize the present month and hour and do our whole duty.

3. An Ancient Postal Delivery

The plan pleased the king and all the congregation, and it was now carried into effect. It was decreed that a proclamation should be made throughout all the land from Beer-sheba on the southern boundary to Dan on the northern limit of the two kingdoms, bidding the people to come to the passover. Couriers were soon hastening in all directions, bearing letters from the king, and we have in this an interesting glimpse into the postal service of the time.

We are much given to thinking that we have invented and put into operation all our magic machines and that the ancients were very poorly off indeed without our comforts and conveniences. We are better off in this respect, but probably not as much as we may think. They also had good roads and means of speedy travel and trade by land and sea and stately buildings and a splendid civilization that at many points rivaled ours.

Anyway, our life no more than theirs consists in the abundance of material things we have.

The proclamation is an impassioned argument and appeal addressed to the people. They are called upon to "turn again unto Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel," ancestral names that carried them far back of their unhappy division and strife into the palmy days of their unity and peace.

Having swept this common chord in their hearts, the king then assured them that God will "return to the remnant that are escaped of you out of the hand of the kings of Assyria," those dreadful Eastern oppressors that were already deporting Israelites into terrible captivity.

Next he warns them against the traditional obstinacy of their fathers and urges them to "yield yourselves unto Jehovah, and enter into his sanctuary." Again promising them that they shall be delivered from their captors if they turn to the Lord, the king concludes with the comforting assurance that "Jehovah your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him."

The whole appeal is pervaded by a beautiful and winning spirit.

It is along these same lines that God approaches us in Christ and appeals to us to return to him.

Such a reasonable proposal and gracious approach to one another on the part of separate friends is the proper basis and method of reconciliation.

When one or the other party to a quarrel displays a spirit of superiority and haughtiness, there is little prospect of settlement and peace; and in carrying on negotiations for peace we should strive to avoid a harsh condemnatory spirit and be patient and charitable.

It is now felt all around that the Allies at Versailles in imposing guilt and reparations upon Germany were too extreme and harsh and demanded impossible conditions which only sowed the seeds of further hatred and future wars. However, these conditions have since been mollified and now a better spirit is growing up among all the nations involved in the great war.

They are coming together as brethren with common rights and interests and growing towards deeper unity and peace.

4. A Scorned Invitation and a Rejoicing People

The couriers hurried from city to city delivering the appeal.

How were they received?

In Israel "they laughed them to scorn and mocked them." They jeered at the messengers and insulted them. They had no proper appreciation of their own condition and danger. So long had they neglected worship and followed sensual heathen rites that they were seared and hardened against such an appeal and turned mercy into mockery.

This is the fatality of wrongdoing: it reacts upon conscience and deadens it into insensibility in which it is no longer receptive of or sensitive to truth and right and duty. It then laughs at the holiest truth as a lie and turns the very gospel of life into a savor of death.

Men thus become wise to do evil, expert and cunning and smart at it, and then they become fools and mock at sin.

Thus the Jews rejected their own Messiah whom God sent to them, and thus we also do the same thing in so far as we do not receive him into our hearts and lives and follow in his steps.

The king's appeal met with a better reception in Judah.

"Also in Judah came the hand of God to give them one heart, to do the commandment of the king and of the princes by the word of Jehovah." The message that was laughed at and mocked in Israel was received with one heart in Judah. How surely shall they that have "one heart" receive a blessing! This was the great mark of the people on the day of Pentecost, all with one accord in one place.

The people gathered in Jerusalem to observe the feast. They began by a work of repentance and cleansing, removing the idolatrous altars and casting them into the Kidron. They were also sanctified, "and Jehovah hearkened to Hezekiah and healed the people." So great was their joy that they extended the feast beyond the seven appointed days to seven days more.

"So there was great joy in Jerusalem." This is always the outcome of genuine religious revival and cleansing in individuals, in a church and in a community and city and country. Let the Spirit of God be poured out upon a city, and its evils will be cleansed away, its social problems will be solved, and it will be filled with great joy.

Any other basis of reform will be superficial and temporary in its work and effects, but religion goes down to the roots and makes all things right with God, and then all the streams and fruits of life will be pure and good.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give a brief sketch of world politics at the time of Hezekiah.
2. What made it difficult for Israel to accept this appeal of Judah?
3. Are we a Christian nation?
4. To what extent are our denominational divisions harmful?
5. Is the League of Nations making any progress?

LESSON III—APRIL 21

Comfort for God's People

Lesson: Isaiah 40:1–11.

Golden Text: As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you. Isaiah 66:13.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 30:1–5.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Secret of True Happiness.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Source of True Comfort.

Lesson Text: Isaiah 40:1–11

1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins.

3 The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain:

5 And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

6 The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field.

7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the breath of Jehovah bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass.

8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever.

9 O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up on a high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold, your God!

10 Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a mighty one, and his arm will rule for him: Behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, *and* will gently lead those that have their young.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Comfort.

2. Preparing the Way of the Lord.

3. The Glory of Jehovah Revealed.

4. Human Frailty and Divine Power.

5. Good Tidings.

Both Israel and Judah were swept over the precipice of captivity; first Samaria into Assyria in 722 B. C., and then Jerusalem into Babylon in 586 B. C. By the rivers of Babylon they hung their harps upon the willows and refused to sing and ate the bitter bread and wept the hot tears of captivity.

With the appearance of Cyrus, the Persian conqueror of Babylon, hope dawned on the horizon.

He issued a decree in 538 B. C., that the captives should return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4), and successive expeditions made their way from Babylon to Jerusalem during the next hundred years, and during this time the people of Israel were reestablished in their own land. Thus a long interval of one hundred and fifty years and more intervenes between chapters 39 and 40 of this book, and our lesson compared with the last introduces us into a new world.

World politics have changed, the map has been remade, old things have passed away and all things have become new.

The prophet is now speaking in this new morning when the darkness of captivity is passing and the light is breaking.

1. Comfort

Comfort is the first note of the new day. It was time for it with these people who had so long sat in the night and chains of captivity. Bitterly had they repented of their national and individual sins and poured out their penitence in their tears.

They had paid dearly for their waywardness and wickedness. But the hour had now arrived when they were ready for pardon and a new beginning.

"Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins." God had fulfilled his threats of judgment and forty years and more of hard bondage and loneliness in a far country had brought the people to a sense of their wrongdoing and guilt.

Nations suffer for their sins as well as individuals.

What a harvest of suffering follows a great war such as is now being reaped in Europe and even throughout the world. We are no longer

engaged in concentrating the guilt of this war upon any one nation, but see that it was generally diffused and grew out of human infirmity and depravity; yet it was a giant "iniquity" that needs to be repented of and then it may be pardoned.

Comfort is one of the most universal needs of the world, whether we view its general condition of poverty and suffering and sorrow, or our individual lot in our common world.

Comfort means an inner fort of strength and courage and hope, and the Bible is the greatest book of comfort ever given to man. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," rings out the voice of this ancient prophet, and a still greater prophet bids us, "Let not your heart be troubled" and promised us the divine Comforter. The word comfort occurs in the Scriptures more than a hundred times and this human need is constantly in the mind and on the heart of our heavenly Father.

Especially to the erring and penitent does God "speak comfortably" that "their iniquity is pardoned." No day is so dark, no guilt is so deep, that God does not have a comforting word to speak to us. Let us in times of discouragement look to those great promises of comfort that are spoken to us by all the prophets of the Bible and supremely by Jesus himself.

He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust and will deal tenderly with us and set a new star of hope and endeavor in our sky and lead us on into a better day.

2. Preparing the Way of the Lord

What is the next word following this promise of comfort? "Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah." Comfort was not to come to these exiles in Babylon as a mere passive sedative to quiet them into a state of dreamy passivity in which their troubles would be soothed to sleep.

Rarely can comfort come to us as long as we remain inactive in the presence of our troubles.

There is always something for us to do to set the blood of fresh energy and hope coursing through our hearts. In the deepest discouragement we are full of dormant energies that can be aroused and hitched to our work and then our whole outlook changes.

Elijah was deep in despondency and thought he wanted to die, when his very idleness was one cause of his trouble and all he needed was to go back to his work and then we hear no more of his wanting to die, if indeed he ever did want to do so.

These captive Israelites would have had no comfort if they had simply sat still and continued to bewail their fate. But there was much work for them to do in the way of preparation for their return to Jerusalem.

They had, in figurative language, to break a way through the wilderness and level a highway and fill up the valleys and bring down the mountains and smooth the rough places into a plain road. Volunteers had to be enrolled, expeditions had to be planned, parties had to be outfitted, the long journey across the desert had to be carried out, and then at Jerusalem itself they had to begin to clear away the ruins and the rubbish and lay the foundations of the new temple and city. And even in Jerusalem fresh obstructions and enemies had to be encountered, and there was always work enough to give them plenty to do and keep them from brooding over their troubles and sinking back into despondency.

Comfort is courage and breeds its strength in resistance.

All this applies to us in our day and environment. We are just as much in need of comfort as these ancient captives, as there are plenty of coils and chains of circumstance in which we are caught and obstructions that block our way.

Our way out of trouble lies along the same path of active service.

We are given the immense task of preparing the way for the coming of the Kingdom of God in the world and still there are valleys to be filled and mountains to be leveled and rough regions to be turned into smooth roads. The task is overwhelming in its magnitude, but only a small bit of it lies in our way and we are to seize this and clear it up and make the road a little smoother in front of your door for the progress of the kingdom.

Only in such a big and inspiring task can we find worthy occupation and satisfaction for all our powers and only in such activity is comfort, inner strength and courage and hope.

Let us first hear the voice calling for comfort and then the voice bidding us, "Prepare in the wilderness the way of Jehovah."

3. The Glory of Jehovah Revealed

What would be the result of this preparation of the way of Jehovah in the wilderness? "The glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

But was it not difficult, if not impossible, to see any divine glory in that stretch of a thousand miles of sand between Babylon and Jerusalem along which struggled these few thousand returning captives? Yes, but faith sees the glorious end in the unpromising beginning.

The inexperienced eye sees only dull dross and ill-smelling scum where the chemist sees glorious colors and the most exquisite perfumes. The untrained eye may see only an illimitable expanse of barren sand and rock where the scientific irrigator sees wheat fields and orchards and prosperous cities. The tides of commerce and trade may be hindered and stopped by a broad deep river, but the engineer sees a web of steel woven as a bridge across that river over which roll the wheels of coming generations.

Not much glory was seen in the several pitiful small boats in which Columbus set sail from Spain, but what a glorious landing did he make. Our early colonies clinging to our Atlantic coast did not promise much, life was hard in them and Europe was inclined to despise them, but they have grown into the dominant nation of the world, and former nations that were not then poor enough to do us reverence now wait on our bounty.

Glory is manifested excellence, hidden worth and beauty brought out into visibility and application.

The light compressed in the sun is not of use to us and would instantly blind and blight us if we were directly exposed to it, but when it is diffused through our atmosphere and inwrought into all living things and becomes the many-colored, richly embroidered garment of earth and crowds all our stores with grain and fruits, the real glory of the sun is seen and appreciated.

The glory of Jehovah may not have been visible in these captives straggling across the desert to Jerusalem, the heathen may have ridiculed the spectacle and scoffed at such vain and foolish ideals and hopes, but the fruitage to-day is the glory of Israel in its literature and life and supremely in the perfect blossom and full glory of Jesus and his mission in the world.

It is now our duty and privilege to give new and fuller expression to this divine glory.

We must learn to see glory, not so much if at all in mere material splendor, in dazzling wealth and great cities and vast material power, but in spiritual realities.

Good people are the most glorious possessions of our world. The people at work on a mission of saving truth and grace, healing the wounds and sorrows of the world and building a universal kingdom of light and love, brotherhood and fellowship and peace, form the true glory of God and all flesh shall yet see it.

4. Human Frailty and Divine Power

At this point we have a picture of the contrast between human frailty and divine power.

The prophet is living amidst the colossal civilization of the Babylonian empire, then tottering to its fall, and he muses on how frail and perishable all such exhibitions of human power are.

"All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." The mighty walls and vast palaces of Babylon had grown up as grass, and Jehovah needed only to blow upon it and it would all wither into dust, which has literally come to pass.

But over against this human frailty stood "the word of our God" which "shall stand forever."

Even the word of Cyrus, who had then pledged the exiled Jews that they should be restored to their own land, was a passing human breath, but the word of God could be trusted and would never prove fickle or impotent. It was part of the comfort of the prophet and the people that they had such a God in whom they could trust.

The centuries have rolled on in a broadening stream and we now have many stupendous evidences of what man can do, but still is it true that his flesh is grass and returns to the dust along with all the work of his hand, and only the word and throne of God stand immovable and are the same yesterday, to-day and forever.

5. Good Tidings

Good tidings are proclaimed to Jerusalem. Long had it been cast into captivity, but now it was to lift up its head and be not afraid and say to the cities of Judah, " Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a mighty one, and his arm will rule for him."

No brighter picture and greater cause of joy could have put new spirit into these people and given them strength and patience and courage for the long journey across the wilderness.

Very beautiful also is the picture of Jehovah as the Shepherd of his flock, gathering the lambs into his arms, carrying them in his bosom, and gently leading those that had their young. They had long been scattered as a flock without a shepherd, and now they were to be gathered back into their ancestral fold under their great Shepherd. They were a pastoral people and no figure meant more to them than that of a shepherd, both in the Old and the New Testament.

The Lord is still our Shepherd and we shall not want, and Jesus is the beautiful Shepherd.

The people of God have grown into a great people and have done many wonderful things, but we are still a flock of sheep and lambs and our greatest security and comfort are found in the great Shepherd of our souls.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of Babylon and of how the Jews came to be there.
2. In what ways do our sins send us into exile?
3. Give illustrations of how the way is now being prepared for Jehovah.
4. Give further contrasts between human frailty and divine power.
5. How may we reflect the glory of Jehovah?

LESSON IV—APRIL 28

The Suffering Servant of Jehovah

Lesson: Isaiah 52:13–53:12.

Golden Text: With his stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5.

Devotional Reading: Revelation 5:9–14.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Our Salvation Cost.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Suffering Saviour.

Lesson Text: Isaiah 53:1–12

1 Who hath believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed?

2 For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who *among them* considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke *was due?*

9 And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Rejected Servant.

2. The Suffering Servant.

3. The Humble Servant.
4. The Victorious Servant.

This great and splendid prophecy relates to the Servant. The meaning of this term had been the subject of much discussion. The view now generally held makes it relate in the first instance to the Jewish nation, which was peculiarly the Servant of God among the nations of the world, and then, by progressive restriction and clearer definition, to the righteous element in the nation, and finally to the One Man who fulfills all its conditions, Jesus the suffering Christ.

The prophecy is, therefore, condensed, figurative and dramatic in style, and this must be borne in mind in its interpretation.

It is a suggestive picture of a Servant of God suffering in his service; and while the picture may have various subordinate fulfillments in the Hebrew nation or in its righteous remnant or in holy prophets, yet its supreme and final fulfillment is in the suffering Christ.

But it always remains for us to fill up on our part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ (Colossians 1:24), and so we are in some degree to fulfill this picture in our patient service and suffering in well doing.

1. The Rejected Servant

"Who believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed?" The speakers appear to be the penitent people of God now in captivity, who, looking back upon their former attitude towards the Servant, see how deaf and blind they were. The Servant grew up before them as a thin sapling, as a root out of parched ground; and he had no beauty that they should desire him. "He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not.

The Servant of God has often presented this unlovely and despised aspect to his contemporaries, especially to those whom he may be opposing.

He is counted a fanatic and a crank, a revolutionist and dangerous man, and every ugly and venomous epithet is hurled at him.

Moses was charged by the Israelites with having led them out into the wilderness to starve them to death, Paul was derided for his mean physical appearance, Socrates was twitted for his ungainly body and ugly face, and when Lincoln had gone to Washington as President a prominent editor thought it proper to say that scientists did not need to go to the forests of Africa to find the ape ancestor of man, they could find him in the White House.

It is easy when we do not like a man to find some defect or infirmity in him at which to aim the shafts of our wit and vemon, and the more eminent he is the more we may dislike him and even villify him.

The supreme instance of such treatment is Jesus Christ.

Few of his own people believed what they heard about him, or saw in his work the arm of the Lord. He grew up among them as a root out of dry ground, crooked and ugly. They saw in that face, now the praise and the glory of the world of art, no beauty that they should desire him, but they despised him and made every evil charge against him and piled sorrows on him and hid their faces from him as though he were the most repulsive and frightful of men.

Men may still be blind to Christ and treat him as though he were the worst, instead of the most beautiful and the best of men.

Nietzsche said that he simply had to hold his nose while reading the Sermon on the Mount, and still there are coarse and vulgar men and women to affect this same disgust while exhibiting their own moral and spiritual nakedness and shame.

Such rejection, however, is not confined to blatant critics and enemies of Jesus, but may be found in quite other circles, and even we while outwardly praising him as the conventional and fashionable thing to do may yet inwardly be turning him out of our hearts and lives.

2. The Suffering Servant

We are next given a picture of the Suffering Servant and this prophetic portrait so closely reproduces the historic Christ that it would seem that it had been drawn from life or that the account had been written after the events.

Every word of the description, every line and color in the portrait, is saturated with suffering and sacrifice.

"Borne our griefs," "carried our sorrows," "wounded for our transgressions," "bruised for our iniquities," "chastisement of our peace," "with his stripes we are healed," "laid on him the iniquity of us all"—the prophet hunts for every word and phrase to iterate and reiterate the vicarious suffering of the Servant.

Every servant of God fulfills in some degree this description.

The mother in her home, the soldier on the field, the workman down in the mine or the sailor up on the mast of the storm-tossed ship, the physician sacrificing his comfort and at the very risk of his life ministering to a patient—life must everywhere be filled with vicarious service and suffering or it would fall to a low level and perish.

All our blessings have been bought with the blood of former generations.

Millions have toiled and suffered that we might live. Other men labored and we are entered into their labors. As the coral reef or island rests upon and is composed of the tiny bones of myriads of minute creatures that toiled through long ages and left their skeletons to build up and compose the rock on which now flourish a rich tropical vegetation and human civilization, so underneath us going far down into past ages are the fossilized toils and trials of countless unknown ancestors on which we build and live to-day.

Again the supreme instance of this vicarious sacrifice are the life and death of Christ.

His life was one of toil and suffering from beginning to end. He was not spared physical hardship as he had not where to lay his head, but his chief afflictions and inflictions were mental and spiritual.

He came unto his own and his own received him not. They poured contempt upon him and wounded him to the heart with every poisoned arrow of hate. Finally they nailed him upon the cross and crushed his life out in its bloody embrace. A great mortal cry escaped from his lips as he exclaimed, "It is finished," and his head fell forward and he was still.

All through this sacrificial ministry and death he was bearing our griefs and bruised for our iniquities and canceling our debt of sin and guilt and making our peace with God.

There are deep problems at the foot of the cross and mysteries centering in its wounds that surpass our power of comprehension, but the broad fact stands out etched against the sky of Calvary that he was there atoning for our sin and opening a way of divine forgiveness and peace.

And yet the sacrifice of Christ is not complete and we are to be partakers of his sufferings and fill out that which they still lack.

3. The Humble Servant

The next view in this composite portrait depicts the Humble Servant. He was oppressed yet he humbled himself and did not open his mouth in an outcry of complaint. By unjust judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of others to whom the stroke was due? And he was thrust into the grave along with the wicked, though he had done no harm, neither was guile in his mouth.

Great servants are never great complainers.

They generally bear their wrongs and say nothing about them. They may be bearing secret crosses that are tearing at their hearts or be subjected to public villification and outrage, and yet no word escapes from their lips and they seal their sorrows in silence.

A small man quickly grows irritated and impatient and makes a fuss about his grievance however petty it may be. The proud in spirit also are quick to resent any wrong, though it be imaginary, and are out for retaliation and revenge.

But great souls are patient and humble and are strong in the Lord.

The heroes in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews did not spend their time and breath in crying out against their oppressors, but they did their work and bore their sufferings and bided God's time.

Christ was the greatest exemplification of patience and silence this world has ever seen.

He did not strive nor cry, neither was his voice heard in the street. When he was reviled he reviled not again, at his trial amidst the false charges and furious hatred of the priests he answered them never a word, and all through his life he bore the contradiction of sinners and possessed his soul in patience and peace.

It is a great lesson we all need to learn: to be humble, patient and quiet, to bear our cross nor question why.

The world is full of shouting men: it needs more quiet men, who do not strive nor cry.

4. The Victorious Servant

This passage is like a great strain of music or symphony and now it rises to the Victorious Servant and closes at a climax with a full diapason.

The sufferings of the Servant shall not be purposeless and fruitless.

"It pleased Jehovah to bruise him." It was not an accident or blind fate that fell upon Jesus and crushed him on the cross, but this was the deep outworking of the purpose and will of God. Therefore it shall not fail of its purpose, but shall result in length of days. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall justify many and he shall be assigned a portion with the great and divide the spoil with the strong.

Is not this all being fulfilled in ways and measures beyond the utmost vision of the prophet?

Christ dropped as a seed into the soil of the hard Roman world to perish, but he sprang up in a harvest that rapidly spread around the Mediterranean shore and has now blown its seed around the world.

Who among the mighty to-day can compare in human loftiness of character and massiveness of attainment with Jesus Christ?

To name any military leader at once makes apparent the absurdity of the comparison, and will any literary character or scientific investigator or philosophic thinker enter the competition? Any and every one of these eminent men would instantly disavow any comparison. As Charles Lamb once said to a company of literary men, "If Shakespeare were to enter into this presence we would all rise, but if Jesus Christ were to enter we would all kneel."

Jesus is even now reigning with a depth and sweep of power no sword or pen or human wisdom or greatness could ever attain and he will yet be crowned Lord of all.

We may quote George Adam Smith's account in his Commentary of the fulfillment of this prophecy: "But about five hundred and fifty years after this prophecy was written, a Man came forward among the sons of men,—among this very nation from among whom the prophecy had arisen: and in every essential of consciousness and of experience He was the counterpart, embodiment and fulfillment of this Suffering Servant and his Service. Jesus Christ answers the questions, which the prophecy leaves unanswered. In the prophecy we see one who is only a specter, a dream, a conscience without a voice, without a name, without a place in history. But in Jesus Christ of Nazareth the dream becomes a reality: He, whom we have seen in this chapter only as the purpose of God, only through the eyes and consciences of a generation yet unborn,—He comes forward in flesh and blood; He speaks, He explains himself, He accomplishes almost to the last detail the work, the patience and the death that are here described as Ideal and Representative."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. By whom was this prophecy written?
2. To what extent was it fulfilled in righteous Israel?
3. Do Scriptural prophecies generally have a near and then a far fulfillment?
4. What part does suffering play in the education of great men? of all men?
5. What will be the final and perfect fulfillment of this prophecy?

LESSON V—MAY 5

What Hilkiah Found in the Temple

Lesson: II Chronicles 34:1–33.

Golden Text: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path. Psalm 119:105.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 19:7–14.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Discovering a Guide-Book.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Bible in National Life.

Lesson Text: II Chronicles 34:14–16, 29–33

14 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of Jehovah *given* by Moses.

15 And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan.

16 And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and moreover brought back word to the king, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they are doing.

29 Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

30 And the king went up to the house of Jehovah, and all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of Jehovah.

31 And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before Jehovah, to walk after Jehovah, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book.

32 And he caused all that were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand *to it.* And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

33 And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were found in Israel to serve, even to serve Jehovah their God. All his days they departed not from following Jehovah, the God of their fathers.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***A Lost Book Found.***
2. ***The Book Read to the King.***
3. ***The Effect of the Book on the King.***
4. ***The Book Taken to a Woman for Interpretation.***
5. ***The Book Opened.***

Josiah, the good son of a corrupt father, came to the throne of Judah at the age of eight and reigned thirty-one years. He instituted a thorough-going reform in cleaning out the idolatrous worship of Baal and repairing the temple, which had fallen into neglect and dilapidation.

While the work of repair was in progress, Hilkiah the high priest made a great discovery.

1. A Lost Book Found

When the officers in charge of the work brought out the money from the chest in which it was stored in the temple, Hilkiah the high priest found the book of the law of the Lord given by Moses. This lost book was probably Deuteronomy, as is evident from the work of reform that its reading brought about in destroying the outlying places of worship and concentrating worship in one central place as is required in that book.

These Jews, priests and king and people, had lost their Bible!

A long history lies behind this statement. For hundreds of years idolatry had been creeping in among the people of both northern Israel and southern Judah and crowding out the true worship. During all these degenerate days temple and Bible were more and more neglected. Rolls of parchment on which the law was written were always necessarily scarce, and they grew scarcer as they were less prized. Finally the last roll had disappeared; even the temple roll was gone; it had been dropped into some chest or tossed among rubbish and was utterly forgotten.

There stood the temple without any book of the law in it, a church without a Bible!

Is this ancient history only? May not we also lose our Bible? Not altogether, it is true, for the book is now so universal and plentiful in its presence, lying on some table or shelf in every house, that it cannot wholly disappear.

Yet we may lose it not less really and fatally.

The Bible that lies as an unread and dust-covered book on the table, or buried in a trunk, is as truly lost as though it had been dropped into some hidden hole and forgotten. And even though it be read in a perfunctory way, yet if it is not obeyed it is still a lost Bible.

The world is full of lost books, and perhaps there are more lost Bibles than of any other kind.

"I have found the book," exclaimed the high priest. While rummaging around in the temple, possibly examining the money-chests, Hilkiah came upon the long-lost, utterly-forgotten parchment, and on unrolling it his astonished eyes began to read the words of the law. What a startling discovery and precious find was this? With what breathless interest must he have read on and on?

It is a great find to discover a good book.

When we first begin to see into the depths of Browning or the beauty of Tennyson or the grand world of Shakespeare we have made a discovery that is more precious than gold: how much richer is the discovery when the book is the law of the Lord?

We may find our lost Bible.

Get that Bible down off its shelf or up out of the bottom of your trunk and begin to read and ponder it; gaze upon its scenes, study its characters, meditate upon its sayings, practice its precepts, absorb and assimilate its spirit, and what will be the result? The old Book which you thought dull and dry as the dust that covered it will begin to gleam and burn with light; or you will find it full of sap and sweetness; and it will presently be a new discovery to you and you will exclaim, "I have found the book."

The Bible is in some degree a hidden treasure to every one of us which we should every day find and explore. If all lost Bibles were found and read and obeyed, how the world would blaze with light! "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

2. The Book Read to the King

Shaphan the scribe first took the book and read it himself. That is the first thing to do with the Bible.

No use in our trying to read or teach it to others unless we have read and digested it ourselves.

Saturating our minds and hearts with the spirit of the Bible will prepare us for the touch of fire from the Holy Spirit and then we shall burn and glow and have power with God and men.

Shaphan, having read the book himself, then took it to the king, and, having reported on the matter for which he was sent, made the startling announcement of the discovery of the book and read it to the king.

The king needs to have the Bible read to him as well as the humblest subject, for this book is no respecter of persons.

Reading the Bible and teaching it to others is especially the work of parents in the home, teachers in the Sunday School and ministers and missionaries; yet it is by no means confined to them, but is the work and duty of all Christians.

We all like to speak of and commend to others the books we read and prize, and it is with pride that we show our acquaintance with popular and classical authors. How much more should we be ready and eager to read and explain "the book of the law of the Lord."

This book goes to the root of human life and will so enrich it as to make it bloom and bear the finest fruits.

We do a great service to a friend when we commend to him a good book; and we do him the greatest service when by precept and example we commend to him the Book of Life.

3. The Effect of the Book on the King

When the king heard the words of the Book he was seized with consternation and rent his clothes in Oriental fear and woe. A sense of the impending displeasure of God and of the unfaithfulness of his fathers overwhelmed him. "For great is the wrath of Jehovah that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of Jehovah, to do according unto all that is written in this book."

He saw at once that such laws could not be violated without bringing upon the offenders grave penalties.

We also often suffer because of the unfaithfulness of our fathers, but then we also reap a harvest of blessing from their faithfulness, so that we should not complain. The Bible contains the laws of life, and, whether we know the book or not, we must live according to its principles or perish. Its essential teachings are not arbitrary rules and regulations that change with climate and class, age and condition, but they are the eternal laws of God's nature and our life.

In keeping of them there is great reward, they are in some degree written upon the universal human heart, and disobedience of them must bring upon us their own retribution.

The king, when he stood in the light of the law of the Lord, was as one stripped naked and horrified at his own uncleanness and guilt. How much better are we prepared to stand the same test?

Many a man living amongst us in unquestioned respectability priding himself on his position and reputation, were he to stand in the light of God's Word and see himself as he is, would cry out in shame and horror.

4. The Book Taken to a Woman for Interpretation

How did the king treat the book? "Go ye, inquire of Jehovah for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of Jehovah."

He did not dismiss the scribe and forget the book, but he wanted to know more about it. Willing to know more, inquiring for light, is always a hopeful state of mind and leads on to larger truth.

Many men, having heard the Bible read, straightway go their way and forget what manner of men they are and grow oblivious to its most solemn warnings. We should feel that we know only a little of the Bible, have only scratched its surface and want to penetrate into the depths and fullness of its riches.

A book that is the law of the Lord should excite our interest and stimulate our most thorough study.

To whom did they go? They went to a woman!

They went to Huldah the prophetess and consulted her. She was specially illumined of the Lord and could interpret the law. Teachers and ministers and scholars can in some degree explain the Bible for us; they have studied it and can throw upon it the light of language and history.

But the Holy Spirit is still the best interpreter of the spiritual wealth and wisdom of God's Word, lighting up its pages and disclosing its beauties and glories.

Through fellowship with him and obedience to him we can inquire of the Lord and learn from him the meaning and power and blessedness of his law.

The fact that a woman was called upon to explain the Bible in this ancient time shows that woman then had a large place in religious thought and life, even filling the high office of prophetess, speaking in the name of the Lord and declaring his judgments.

Woman's place in the church and kingdom should not be narrowed in our day but rather broadened, and she is coming forward to fill it in increasing measure.

"The Lord giveth the word: the women that publish it are a great host."

In every land and in many an official place of teaching her voice is now heard explaining and applying the law of the Lord, and the church is at last beginning to utilize in fuller degree her peculiar gifts and service.

5. The Book Opened

The king assembled the elders and priests and Levites and inhabitants of Jerusalem in the temple and "read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of Jehovah." The king then took a pledge "to walk after Jehovah and to keep his commandments," and "the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers."

Having read the Bible they then obeyed it, translating its commandments into conduct and character, its precepts into practice, their promises into performance, the letter of the law into the life of the spirit.

This is the test of all our Bible reading and study.

Truth is in order to goodness, and the truth of the Bible is given us in order that we may plant it as seeds in our minds and hearts and cause it to bear fruit in our lives. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

In vain do we read the Bible if we do not live it. We may study its language and history and customs and memorize and master its teachings and be orthodox in our beliefs and yet be all the worse if we disobey it and thus sin against its light. "The demons also believe, and shudder." "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Increasing light only increases our guilt if we do not transmute our light into life as the tree by its subtle chemistry transmutes the golden sunlight into fruit.

There is a great plenty of truth as it is printed and published and preached, but there is a lamentable shortage of truth as it is lived, the living gospel that is known of all men and passes at par value in the home and office and mill and all the relations of life.

King Josiah now made a clean sweep of all the foreign idolatrous abominations that had defiled the religion and people of Israel and he turned them to the worship and work of the Lord. Happy the people who turn from all unrighteousness and walk in the ways of God. They shall prosper and peace shall be within their palaces.

Such was the work of this good king, and when the righteous rule the people rejoice. But the nation that forgets God shall perish, and history is a vast graveyard of such nations.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How much of the Bible did Josiah and his people have?
2. How can we keep from losing our Bible?
3. What are some good ways of reading the Bible?
4. How can we make Bible study more attractive?
5. What use did Jesus make of the Bible?
6. How can we introduce the Bible more generally into our national life?

LESSON VI—MAY 12

The Early Ministry of Jeremiah

Lesson: Jeremiah 1:1–10; 6:10–11; 8:18; 9:2; 26:1–24.

Golden Text: We must obey God rather than men. Acts 5:29.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Taking a Stand for God.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Fidelity in the Face of Difficulties.

Lesson Text: Jeremiah 1:1–10; 26:8–15

1 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin:

2 To whom the word of Jehovah came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

4 Now the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations.

6 Then said I, Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child.

7 But Jehovah said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak.

8 Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah.

9 Then Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth:

10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

8 And it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that Jehovah had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of Jehovah, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant? And all the people were gathered unto Jeremiah in the house of Jehovah.

10 And when the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house unto the house of Jehovah; and they sat in the entry of the new gate of Jehovah's *house*.

11 Then spake the priests and prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy of death; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

12 Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, Jehovah sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

13 Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Jehovah your God; and Jehovah will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

14 But as for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes.

15 Only know ye for certain that, if ye put me to death, ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof; for of a truth Jehovah hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Prophet's Credentials.

2. The People Enraged Against the Prophet.

3. The Prophet's Brave Defense.

4. The Princes Restrain the Mob.

5. The Elders Appeal to History.

Jeremiah was one of the last of the prophets of Judah and saw it go down into captivity to the Babylonians in the final fall of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. He was himself soon after carried into Egypt and is not heard of again. It was his fate to be a lonely, misunderstood, intensely unpopular and bitterly hated and persecuted prophet, and he was thrown into a horrible dungeon from which he narrowly escaped with his life.

Bits of autobiography are scattered through his writings in which we are given glimpses of his call (1:2–10), his mission (1:11–19), his anxious sympathies (4:8–19; 8:18), his awestruck sense of Jehovah's power (4:23–26), his lonely sorrows (20:7–18), and the divine compulsion that sustained him (20:7–18). In his Lamentations he pours out his soul in floods of grief and thus became known as the "weeping prophet."

He was unhappily called upon to prophesy against his own people and city and he predicted its fall under the Babylonians thundering against its gates and even advised surrender to them, which seemed to his compatriots clear and deep treason against his own country.

In these times when all outward things were rushing into wreck Jeremiah put emphasis on personal, inward, spiritual religion, trust in God and obedience to his will (7:4; 9:8; 31:31–34).

1. The Prophet's Credentials

By what right did the prophet speak? What credentials could he show? An assured conviction and voice from Jehovah: "I have ap-

pointed thee a prophet unto the nations." To this the prophet responded, "Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child." These great men, Moses and Solomon and now Jeremiah, were humble and felt themselves little children in comparison with their divinely appointed tasks.

Humility is often a mark of greatness and is a stepping stone to great service.

But Jehovah told the prophet he was not a child, but that "to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak."

There are times when we are not to nurse our humility but arise and stand upon our feet and assert our own ability and authority and quit ourselves like men.

"Be not afraid because of them: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah." And as for something to say, let the prophet trust the Lord for that. "Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth."

Can we ever speak thus?

We need to be careful on this point and not assume that we are inspired to speak and command others on too slender evidence. Nevertheless we may know what is God's truth and way and will for us, and then we should cast fear to the winds and stand up and speak boldly.

When we speak the words of Jehovah and of Jesus we know the doctrine that it is of God. Then do we know that we are set "to build and to plant."

2. The People Enraged Against the Prophet

On one occasion when Jeremiah "had made an end of speaking" after telling the people that Jehovah would "make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth," "the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die." The holy city was their pride and the temple the very eye of their city. To speak against Jerusalem was treason of the rankest kind, and against the temple was sacrilege.

The truth and poignancy of the prophet's words were not considered: only their sharp thrust and sting were noted and resented.

It takes no small amount of sense and grace to stand charges against one's country without animosity, and against one's religion without hot indignation; such charges touch the heart and fire the blood.

Yet the truth should always be heard and is the only thing that will do us permanent good.

Priests and people, however, rose against Jeremiah and threatened him with death. Instead of calmly hearing his message, they proposed to kill the messenger. Instead of putting out the fire, they would silence the fire bell by hanging the man who was ringing it.

This is the way the world has often dealt with its prophets.

Socrates, Paul, Luther, Latimer, Lincoln—long is the roll of those who in one way or another have been made to suffer for truth and duty. The disposition still lurks in us to strike back at those whose message rebukes us. A man seems so completely answered and silenced when his head is off.

Many a faithful pastor in the pulpit has suffered in this service, and we should all be careful to receive admonition in a spirit of meekness and not in anger.

3. The Prophet's Brave Defense

Word of the turbulent gathering and threatened violence reached the princes and judges, and they came up to the temple and sat in judgment on the case. The priests and people preferred their charges against Jeremiah, and he made a noble answer.

He first rolled the responsibility of his message on the Lord. "Jehovah sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard."

When the preacher or reformer or truth-teller in any field has the Lord back of him he can stand up in unflinching bravery and face any angry congregation or city mob.

Then Jeremiah repeated and emphasized his message to the effect that the people should amend their ways and obey the voice of the Lord, who would then withhold the impending judgment. No threats of violence would induce him to modify his message by a word or syllable: he stood by it and drove it home upon his hearers with a sharper point in the face of angry opposition.

A coward has no business in the shoes of a prophet or in a pulpit; let only brave men stand there.

Then with beautiful submission the prophet said: "I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes." He was not taking anxious thought for his own life: that was in the hands of the people—and of God. He was concerned only with his duty: other people might do as they willed.

A man who has this spirit cannot be cowed or conquered. God is for him, who can be against him?

Nevertheless, the prophet warned his enraged opponents of the consequences of their threatened violence. If they took his life they would bring innocent blood upon themselves and their city, and their retribution would never sleep. And he closed his answer by a solemn asseveration that Jehovah had sent him to speak unto them.

When God speaks through a prophet or preacher or teacher we should take care that we give earnest heed to his words.

Amending our ways is the only way of escaping the judgment that will fall upon us if we are in the way of evil doers.

4. The Princes Restrain the Mob

The princes of the people were deeply impressed with the sincerity of Jeremiah and the truth of his message and declared: "This man is not worthy of death: for he hath spoken to us in the name of Jehovah our God." This illustrates the office and value of judges to weigh evidence and restrain the impulses of the people and the violence of a mob.

Democracy is a great boon and force in the progress of the world, but it has its dangers and needs proper checks and safeguards.

It is likely to be easily stirred with prejudice and passion and swept into unjust and cruel action. Autocracy may impose a heavy yoke upon a people, but mobocracy is the worst of all fates to fall upon men.

And therefore democracy needs to impose upon itself the guard and guidance of wise men who shall sit in review and judgment upon its ways and see that they conform to cool reason and impartial right.

The princes gave such decision in this case, for no man is worthy of death for speaking truth, however sharp and severe it may be.

The nation that kills its prophets is cutting off its own head.

Spain in its Inquisition cut off the tallest heads and biggest brains and this has something to do with its decadence and impotence to-day, reducing it to a third-rate power and pitiful spectacle in our modern world. The Bolsheviki in Russia have been pursuing the same foolish and fatal policy, murdering its intellectuals and thereby putting out its eyes and bringing upon it the doom of a blind giant wildly groping about in the dark.

Rather than persecute its prophets a people should honor the men who speak brave words of rebuke and reformation.

Such men are the true friends and guides and progressive forces of a people, who deliver them from evil and uplift them.

We do well to honor those who dare to rebuke us faithfully and urge us into the path of truth and obedience.

5. The Elders Appeal to History

Certain elders of the land now rose up and confirmed this decision of the princes. They seem to have remained silent before the threatening of the people, but now they caught the contagion of the courage of the princes and spoke out brave enough along with them.

They adduced an instance from their own history that taught the same lesson.

A prophet in the days of King Hezekiah had uttered a dire prophecy against Zion, but did the king and people put him to death? No, they feared the Lord, and then the Lord repented him of the evil he had pronounced, or adapted his judgment and action to the changed conduct of the people. "Thus should we commit great evil against our own souls" (17–19), concludes these elders.

History is a great teacher of truth and morals, law and order, because it is a record of the experience of men of like passions with ourselves in like circumstances and temptations, and what happened to them will surely happen to us in like conditions.

We have a long history behind us in all things, law and government, science and literature and art, morals and religion, and this is why we

are so far on in civilization and is a great reason why we should keep ourselves from folly and walk in the tried path of wisdom. When we go wrong " we commit great evil against our own souls."

All our wrong doing to others strikes back into our own bosoms.

Every sin is a stab at our own hearts, but our souls are secure against every kind of evil when we keep pure within.

If we let no evil thought or feeling find entrance into our hearts, the devil can find nothing in us to take hold of, no tinder his torch can touch into flame, no powder any fiery spark of his nature can explode, and all his blazing darts will fall quenched and harmless at our feet.

Still another instance of their history was adduced by the elders, which occurred in the reign of Jehoiakim who caught a faithful prophet and slew him with a sword (20–24).

History is full of such warnings and impresses its grave lessons on us not once nor twice but many times as it shows us the laws of life working in every instance with inexorable certainty.

Many nations have gone down to death and left mournful monuments to warn us against the folly and fatality of trampling upon the words of our prophets.

It is encouraging to read that " the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death." So the angry, unreasonable mob was checked in its blind murderous passion, and the brave prophet was saved by the cool reasoning and wise warning of the princes and elders.

The mob spirit is one of the most dangerous and disgraceful aspects of our American life, putting us in a very bad light in comparison with other nations and bringing upon us the condemnation of the world. We should stand up against it and endeavor to instil into our people such respect for law and for fundamental human right as will check and stop it.

No life is safe as long as any life is at the mercy of a mob.

Every true servant of God is in his keeping, however his life may be threatened or even destroyed.

Though truth may be on the scaffold and wrong be on the throne, yet " standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some instance of modern prophets who have enraged their own people.
2. Why is democracy a hard government to administer?
3. Has this been proved in Russia, Italy and Spain?
4. What checks have we in our government to restrain hasty action?
5. What can we do to check the mob spirit in our country?

LESSON VII—MAY 19

Jeremiah Calls to Obedience

Lesson: Jeremiah 7:1–26.

Golden Text: Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people. Jeremiah 7:23.

Devotional Reading: Psalms 96:7–13.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Doing What God Commands.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Obedience Essential to True Religion.

Lesson Text: Jeremiah 7:1–11, 21–23

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying,

2 Stand in the gate of Jehovah's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of Jehovah, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship Jehovah.

3 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

4 Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, are these.

5 For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbor;

6 If ye oppress not the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt:

7 Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, from of old even for evermore.

8 Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit.

9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods that ye have not known,

10 And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered; that ye may do all these abominations?

11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, saith Jehovah.

21 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Add your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat ye flesh.

22 For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices:

23 But this thing I commanded them, saying, Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. At the Gate of the House of Jehovah.

2. Amend Your Ways.

3. Trust Not in Lying Words.
4. A Den of Robbers.
5. Obedience and Not Sacrifice.

The prophet in this passage deals with an unsparing hand with the low religious and moral condition of the people of Judah as they were now sinking towards their fall into captivity. Their deliverance from Sennacherib nearly a century before (II Kings 19:35) had intensified their pride and confidence in the temple and all the outward forms of religion while they were trampling upon its inner spirit and turning the very temple itself into a den of robbers.

Jeremiah denounces them with unflinching bravery and splendid scorn, beginning his judgment at the house of Jehovah and carrying it down into all the life of the people.

1. At the Gate of the House of Jehovah

The prophet takes his stand at the gate of the house of Jehovah and there proclaims his word of the Lord.

The house of the Lord is the proper place to declare the will of the Lord.

It stands as the symbol of his presence and he manifests himself there in a special way.

The temple has been succeeded by the church and the prophet by the preacher in our day.

God declares his will in the church through his inspired Word and the preacher is his messenger. It is necessary to have specially qualified men to speak to us with expert wisdom and authority in all fields, and so we have professors of science, medicine, law, literature, art, government, engineering, and so on. The Christian minister and the teacher are trained and appointed to declare the will of God in the highest field of life in our relations with God.

They have a high privilege and should appreciate their office and be prepared for it.

And like the ancient prophet, the modern preacher should be outspoken and brave in declaring the will of God in relation to duty and to social injustice and all the forms of sin. Important as are the teach-

ings of men, expert men in all the lower fields of life, this highest wisdom is the most important of all, for it is always the higher that lifts the lower.

No other house will be right when the house of the Lord is not in its central and supreme place in the life of the people.

And as the house of Jehovah is a good place to speak, so is it a good place to hear.

The prophet stood at the gate of the temple and proclaimed, "Hear the word of Jehovah, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship Jehovah." It is no use to go in if we do not hear when we are in. And as much depends in the hearing as on the preaching.

The preaching may be ever so good, instructive and inspiring and it may tell us the very will of God, but it is all in vain if we simply sit in the pews with our minds occupied and crowded with business, fashion, pleasure and all the secular things of life.

There is much poor preaching in the pulpit, but there is far more poor hearing in the pews, and we all need to take heed in the church to both what we say and how we hear.

2. Amend Your Ways

"Amend your ways, and your doings," began the sermon of the prophet.

He wasted no words in a long introduction, but came right to the point and hit the center.

The people were orthodox enough in their creed, but their character was bad and their conduct was wicked. They were stealing and murdering and committing adultery and swearing falsely and burning incense to the dreadful Baal and other gods. Jerusalem reeked with social injustice and was rotten with immorality.

Jeremiah tore the mask of their religion right in their church and disclosed its hideous iniquity.

There was only one cure for such a diseased condition of their social order and city and that was to amend their ways and their doings.

The way to cure sin is to quit it.

It must be cut out of the soul as a cancer out of the body. Our social condition and personal sins may be different from those of these people in ancient Jerusalem, but we would be bold to claim that they are less guilty and deadly. Our light has increased and this also increases guilt, for to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

But the divine remedy is also open to us: "Amend your ways, and your doings." They need amending and we know this, our own consciences bearing witness against us.

And we can amend our ways; we have the teaching and light and motives and the human will power and divine grace by which we can take our broken character and mend its fractures and our wayward conduct and make it conform to truth and right, human justice and welfare and divine righteousness.

Our lives are often as broken fragments of some beautiful thing which can be put together and cemented into their right form and strength and beauty.

Our whole civilization is out of joint and presents a painful spectacle of disorder and broken justice and a shattered social order.

We need to amend it at every point, beginning with our own selves.

How can we amend our modern world? This is our Christian problem and duty, and the Christian world should give to it its profoundest thought and its most earnest efforts.

3. Trust Not in Lying Words

"Trust ye not in lying words," says the prophet, and what were these false words? "The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, are these" buildings. As they observed the great building they kept uttering this iteration expressive of their pride and trust in the imposing architectural pile.

Almost these very words were echoed in the same holy city by the disciples of Jesus as they were passing out of the later temple of their day: "Teacher, behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings!" These disciples also had intense pride in their temple and thought that Jesus himself would be impressed by it.

This spirit has not passed from us.

Christianity has built costly churches and stately cathedrals and these are a noble expression of its faith and aspiration. A great cathedral is frozen worship, worship crystalized and carved in stone. It stands as a symbol of the Infinite and Eternal and its lofty fretted roof and painted windows all glorious with color and its long-drawn aisles and its great organ rolling grand chords and seas of song through its arches put a spell on the human soul that makes it realize the mystic presence of God.

We do well to build and appreciate such churches and cathedrals. Yet we may put our trust in them as though they had some magical virtue and thus turn them into veritable idols.

When they are empty of the spirit of worship and of the mind of Christ their splendors of architecture and art only turn to mockery and their very walls may cry out against us.

It was so with this temple of Solomon in the days of Jeremiah and they were saying over and over again, "The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah are these." They were repeating the words in a way that turned them into lying words and made their very temple a house of falsehood. Everything they said and did in that temple gave the lie to the truth and righteousness of Jehovah.

Instead of being filled with his glory, it was reeking with their own selfishness and sensuality and sin.

Jesus also passed a verdict of retribution and destruction on the temple of Herod that so excited the pride of his disciples. "Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down." That is what will happen to our churches and cathedrals if we empty them of divine glory and fill them with our pride and impurity and social injustice.

They shall crumble into dust and become our condemnation and disgrace.

The best things are capable of the worst abuse, and our very words of worship may be turned into lying words. Trust not in such words.

4. A Den of Robbers

The prophet now enumerated a catalogue of the sins of the people of Jerusalem, charging them with stealing, murder, adultery, swearing

falsely, and burning incense unto horrid heathen gods, and he demands of them, "Will ye . . . come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered; that ye may do all these abominations?"

With brazen faces and unholy hands they would stalk into the temple and declare they were delivered from their enemies and were pure as the unspotted marble and white linen of their house of worship. And all the while their house was outwardly glorious in splendor but inwardly was full of all manner of uncleanness and smelt to heaven.

This also was not only ancient history but repeated itself in the same city in the days of Jesus.

"My house," he said of the same temple as rebuilt by Herod, "shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of robbers." Jesus uttered his condemnation of the temple seven hundred years after Jeremiah had uttered the same condemnation, and here we are nineteen hundred years after Jesus and would not his words still fall upon us and find us guilty?

How may we turn our churches into a den of robbers?

When we rob one another in any way and degree, whether of property or reputation or of brotherly kindness and help we are robbing God. We may go into the church pretended and ostentatious worshipers, and yet while sitting in its very seats and apparently joining in its worship we may be plotting or conniving at or profiting by social injustices and wickedness that are nothing else than robbery of man and of God.

Woe unto the church that thus harbors and throws its cloak over individual and social iniquity! It is already incurring the judgment of almighty God and of its own Lord and Christ that it is verily a den of robbers.

The church should be a refuge for the oppressed and a house in which are preached and applied ideas and duties of justice and brotherhood, of purity and sincere piety, of love towards God and brotherhood and good will among men.

Let everyone look into his own church and into his own pew or seat in that church and see that it is cleansed of all such iniquity and is filled with justice and peace.

5. Obedience and Not Sacrifice

The prophet now comes around, as all these Hebrew prophets do, to the spirituality of worship, the inward spirit of service and sacrifice of the heart as contrasted with the outward service of temple and ritual and burnt sacrifice on its altar.

"Add your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat ye flesh." This was an ironical allusion to their eating the flesh of the burnt offering that was supposed to be wholly offered unto the Lord, but they made a show of offering it and then ate it! A cheap kind of worship was that, that pretended to make an offering to the Lord which was then taken back and devoted to personal use. This thing is also possible with us, for we may build a costly church and dedicate it to the worship of God when we are really devoting it to our own comfort and pride.

We pretend to be giving it to him while we are keeping it in our own hands and use it for our own glory.

How to use the rites of religion and yet not let them crowd religion out and take its place has ever been a difficult problem in the history of all religions, and not less in the history of Christianity. But in vain do we offer outward sacrifices if we do not have the inner sacrifice of the spirit and the reality of religion in a pure heart and an obedient life.

When we thus walk in the way we are commanded it shall "be well with us."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Are our preachers as outspoken and brave as the Hebrew prophets?
2. In what ways may the preachers and teacher fail in declaring the whole will of God?
3. Why does God love the gates of Zion more than our homes (Psalm 87:2)?
4. Why do we not turn robbers out of the church?
5. Do we need both outward ritual and inward obedience?

LESSON VIII—MAY 26

God's Law in the Heart

Lesson: Jeremiah 31:1-40; John 1:17; Hebrews 8:7-13.

Golden Text: Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. Psalm 119:11.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:9-16.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How Can We Know God?

Topic for Young People and Adults: God's Law in the Heart.

Lesson Text: Jeremiah 31:29-34; John 1:17-18

29 In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.

30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

31 Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah.

33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Individual Responsibility.***
2. ***A New Covenant.***
3. ***Law in the Inward Parts.***
4. ***Universal Knowledge of the Lord.***
5. ***Law and Grace.***

The prophet begins to paint a brighter picture of his people in "the days to come." The Bible is always a book of hope and in the winter

it can see the buds of spring and in the darkest night the first faint dawn of the morning. The arm of Jehovah has a long reach and can grasp " the far-off interest of tears."

Let us not be discouraged in times of discouragement but set our faces forward and press toward the mark of the prize of the promises of God.

1. Individual Responsibility

The first fact that the prophet sees standing out conspicuous " in those days " is individual responsibility. " In those days they shall say no more. The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every man shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge."

In primitive society the individual is so merged in the corporate tribe that he has little individual personality and responsibility, but his life is largely determined for him.

Especially does he inherit a traditional system that imposes upon him beliefs and customs and consequences that are a terrible burden and penalty. He suffers on account of his fathers. The sour grapes they ate set his teeth on edge.

But as civilization advances, while it grows more complex and still binds the individual in a system of law and custom, yet he has far more choice and liberty and responsibility.

He can throw off in a larger measure the ill consequences of his father's doings and live his own life. His teeth are not sharpened by the sour grapes his father's ate.

Yet must he also bear closer judgment upon his own deeds and " die for his own iniquity."

While the number of people around us have enormously increased and each one is now only one in a billion and a half of the population of the world, yet he cannot escape his misdeeds by hiding in the crowd or by merging himself in a multitude. Many and marvelous are the ways in which men are caught and called to account. Though they fly to the opposite side of the globe, yet in serious cases are they tracked and generally run down.

But whether caught in the coils of the law or not, yet sin is also its own judge and policemen to arrest the guilty soul and inflict punishment.

It is a law written in the constitution of the world that "every one shall die for his own iniquity" and "each one of us shall give account of himself to God."

2. A New Covenant

The prophet again looks into "the days to come" and hears Jehovah making a great promise: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah."

New things are the mainspring of progress and the hope of the world.

Old things are fundamental and good, but if we never had a new idea or new day the world would stand still and stagnate in its tracks. Old things always have in them the seeds of new things. The soil is still full of harvests, and the old sun is newly resplendent every morning and has in it heat and light for millions of years.

God has made many covenants with us and dealt bountifully and graciously with us, yet he has not exhausted himself and there is no danger that his arm will be shortened that he cannot do anything more for us.

The Old Testament is a grand covenant, but the New Testament is a more glorious one, shining with the splendor of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are living in a day of broadening horizons and and are constantly bursting into new seas in which we come upon new worlds of knowledge and discovery and opportunity.

We are living, we are dwelling,
In a grand and awful time;
In an age on ages telling,
To be living is sublime.

Our God is ever looking into "the days to come" and saying, "I will make a new covenant with you," so that for us "the best is yet to be."

The new covenant is also set in contrast with the old: "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I

took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt." They were then children and had to be led by visible signs and taught the elementary laws of religion and life and at times dealt with severely as wayward children. That was now all behind them and they were to go forward into higher and better things as children in the school advance into higher grades and enter into wider knowledge and liberty and life.

We have left behind us the old covenant of Moses and the prophets and have advanced into the new covenant of the Gospel that is so much freer and more glorious.

And we have advanced far beyond the covenants and customs of our fathers and live in a better day; and we should appreciate our privileges and be thankful for them and live up to them.

3. Law in the Inward Parts

What was to be the distinctive feature of the new covenant as contrasted with the old? "I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it."

The distinction between outward rules and inward spirit is familiar.

At first we do things by rules that guide and constrict us like a harness. Thus we learn music by following the instruction of the teacher and book and awkwardly and painfully endeavor to find the right keys and play them in time. Gradually through practice we learn to read the music rapidly and put the fingers on the right keys readily and finally the expert player sweeps his fingers over the keyboard so rapidly the eye cannot follow them and never misses a note; and he does it with unconscious ease and spontaneity. The rules are now written on his heart or wrought into his nerves and muscles so that the instrument is almost a part of his body and he plays as he breathes or as the bird sings.

It is in this way that skill approaching perfection is acquired in any field.

A carpenter is not a good carpenter who must think how to hold his saw or plane. Not until the hand has forgotten the processes by which it has acquired skill does it reach perfection.

It is just so in the moral and spiritual field.

The duties of religion and the graces of the spirit are not fully developed and exercised until they have passed from outer rules to inner spirit and disposition. No one is perfect in truthfulness who must resolve and make an effort to tell the truth, and no one has acquired perfect patience who must try to be patient.

The perfectly truthful and patient person tells the truth and is patient without trying or even thinking about it.

The old dispensation of Moses was largely one of law which required and constricted men into obedience, but the new dispensation of the Gospel is one of the spirit in which men freely live the law as the unconscious activity of their inner nature and disposition.

It is easy to do what we have acquired as our fixed habit and then we delight to do the will of God in all our ways.

4. Universal Knowledge of the Lord

This inner law of the heart shall become universal so that it will be a social acquirement and shall pervade and mold all our social laws and life. The prophet looking forward into "the days to come" sees this law so universally incorporated in social life that "they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them even unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah."

In the meantime, however, this process of mutual personal instruction should and must go on.

The knowledge of the Lord, like all knowledge, must be diffused from one to another; from the parent to the child, from the teacher to the pupil, from the professor to students, and from the preacher to his people, and thus it spreads like leaven in the meal, each particle imparting to the next its mysterious contagion, or each mind conveying its knowledge and life to other minds.

All the world is in this school of learning one from another.

What goes on in the home and school and church is universally working in the world through newspapers and books and literature and through personal contacts in friendships and in society.

The duty especially rests upon all Christians to impart to their neighbors their knowledge of the Lord.

The preacher in the pulpit and the teacher in the Sunday school class are specially trained and set apart for this work, but it also is the duty of every believer. Public meetings and evangelistic campaigns have their place in the endeavor to reach people in the mass and convert them wholesale as on the day of Pentecost, but these are like the heavy rains that flood the fields and streams and may work some destruction.

Far more effective is the quiet personal contact of mind on mind and heart on heart by which the water of grace is distilled and imparted like the dew that quietly and gently finds each drop its own blade of grass and thus keeps the world green and growing.

Jesus sent out his disciples two and two and we are now coming back to this "visitation evangelism" by which church members go around two by two and see and solicit people in their homes.

Nevertheless, the ideal outcome of this personal evangelism is the universal knowledge of the Lord when such special means of religious education and conversion will be merged in universal family instruction in which children will grow up in Christian knowledge and life and never know any other.

Every man's neighbor should know the Lord before he becomes a neighbor by having been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

5. Law and Grace

Our lesson now passes from the Old Testament to the New, from Moses to Christ, from law to grace.

Law comes first in all our life as a necessary condition of existence. Without law we would be in a world of chaos in which no order could endure, no life could live.

The Old Testament is largely a system of laws which lay down the hard and fast condition, "which if a man do, he shall live in them" (Lev. 18:5).

However law is a good servant but a hard master and when rigidly enforced it knows no mercy.

This inexorable nature of law would work cruel hardship and even injustice in some instances if there was no provision for relaxing its demands in mitigating circumstances. Our civil law makes provision for such cases in the court of equity and in the pardoning power.

It is this principle that makes room in the justice of God for mercy and supplements law with grace.

The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Christ is the incarnation and manifestation of the love of God for our redemption. In him our sin is atoned for and through our faith in him is forgiven and forgotten.

This is the "good news" of the Gospel and is its very glory, without which we could not contend with God and could "not answer him one of a thousand." This is the fullness of mercy of which we have all received "and grace for grace."

It is because of this intervention of grace that God "might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). But what assurance have we that Jesus can reveal God, for "no man hath seen God at any time." True enough, but then "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

Every point in our redemption from the reign of law through grace is thus met.

Law is respected and still binds us in its moral obligations, but also "by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Is there any conflict between individual responsibility and social responsibility?
2. What are some of the various covenants that God makes with us?
3. How can we transmute Christian graces into unconscious habits?
4. Are we gaining or losing in general religious education?
5. How can we reconcile the apparent conflict between law and grace?

LESSON IX—JUNE 2

Later Experiences of Jeremiah

Lesson: Jeremiah 20:1–6; 37:1–38:28; 43:1–7.

Golden Text: Blessed are ye when men reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Matthew 5:11.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 5:3–11.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Standing True in Hard Places.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Forms of Modern Persecution.

Lesson Text: Jeremiah 38:4–13

4 Then the princes said unto the king, Let this man, we pray thee, be put to death; forasmuch as he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.

5 And Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do anything against you.

6 Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchijah the king's son, that was in the court of the guard: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire; and Jeremiah sank in the mire.

7 Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch, who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon (the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin),

8 Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying,

9 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die in the place where he is, because of the famine; for there is no more bread in the city.

10 Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die.

11 So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence rags and worn-out garments, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.

12 And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these rags and worn-out garments under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.

13 So they drew up Jeremiah with the cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Prophet in a Hard Situation.

2. A Cruel Fate.

3. A Black Man to the Rescue.
4. Old Clothes and Rags.

We are now witnessing the last days of Judah as it perishes in its own wickedness. The terrible people of the farther East who had already blotted out Israel were now closing in around Jerusalem. Successive waves of invasion carried its people off into captivity in Babylon. The first captivity occurred under Jehoiakim and Daniel was among these captives.

The evil reign of Jehoiakim was succeeded by the short reign of only three months of his son Jehoiachin. Nebuchadnezzar came up against him and carried him to Babylon, where he remained a captive for thirty-seven years. Upon the vassal throne of Judah Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah, a brother of Jehoiakim, the last king of Judah, and he only a "shadow king over a desperate band of men."

It was only the dregs of the people that the Chaldeans left behind in Jerusalem, and they soon showed their wickedness and folly. They again looked towards Egypt for help against their rulers, and then the Chaldeans swarmed up around the city for its final destruction.

It was a terrible time.

"Famine within the walls aided the besiegers without. Pestilence added its horrors. Mothers were driven to murder and ate their own children. The richest citizens, even ladies in their magnificent crimson robes, wandered about, searching for scraps in the dunghills (Lam. 4:5-10). The houses were full of sick and wounded. The roar of the siege night and day filled the air."

Shut in the city in this terrible time was Jeremiah the prophet. He had his lot cast in an evil day when his conscience and his God compelled him to prophesy against it, and this brought upon him hardship and persecution. His exclamation, "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth!" (15:10), recalls Hamlet's plaint, "The time is out of joint; O cursed spite; that ever I was born to set it right."

1. A Prophet in a Hard Situation

Jeremiah prophesied, "Thus saith Jehovah, He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live. Thus saith Je-

hovah, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it." Certain petty princes or officers of the king, Shephatiah, Gedaliah, Jucal, and Pashhur, heard this dire prophecy and reported his words to the king and demanded that the prophet should be " put to death: forasmuch as he weakeneth the hands of the men of the city, and the hands of the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt."

Jeremiah was in the hard situation of a man who had to seem to be unpatriotic.

He had to tell the people humiliating and painful truth; to stand up against the constituted authorities, though these authorities were in rebellion against their foreign rulers. He saw that there was no possible hope of overcoming or escaping the besieging enemies, and that the best thing to do was to surrender and submit to them. This looked like turning traitor to his own city and people and joining with their enemies.

We can easily realize the feeling of the princes and people against such a prophet.

In time of war it is necessary that the people act as a whole against the enemy; and the man that incurs the suspicion of sympathizing with them brings upon himself the instant and fierce indignation of his fellow citizens.

We had this experience in the great war when some citizens were under suspicion and surveillance on account of their German connections, and in all the warring countries pacifists that spoke out against the war incurred no small amount of criticism and in some instances were put under government restraint.

It takes the highest courage and it may be the loftiest patriotism to tell the truth in such times. Yet the truth should be told at all times, though there is such a thing as proper prudence in the time and way of telling it.

The truth cannot be told to-day about the government in Russia and Italy and Spain, and men have been expelled from or murdered in these countries for prophesying.

It may take courage to tell the truth to other people than rulers and princes.

The preacher in the pulpit may face this very thing. There are ways in which influential pew holders can intimate to him to speak softly on certain subjects and utter threats against him which they may carry out. John the Baptist went to his death for this reason, Christ went to his cross, and still the Christian prophet may have to speak at the risk of his ministerial life. The pew and the people have subtle ways of saying to the preacher, "Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isaiah 30:10), when the things that ought to be said may be rough and sharp.

It was not true of Jeremiah that "this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt." He was the one man in that city who saw its true welfare and had the courage to speak it out. This is the cry that the demagogue always raises against the truthteller and reformer, but it is false.

The truthteller is the man that helps the people into better ways and does not hurt them.

Is the physician our enemy when he tells us the truth about our condition and warns us that we must follow his instructions or grave consequences will follow? Is the man that rings the firebell and rouses us out of sleep in a burning house seeking our hurt or our welfare? The warnings of the wise may seem false to the foolish, but they are words of wisdom and of life.

Let us dare to hear the truth about our nation and city, and about our church and schools and homes, and about our own condition, for in such truth lies the way of deliverance out of evil and of true welfare.

2. A Cruel Fate

Zedekiah answered these petty princes, "Behold, he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do anything against you." There speaks the weak and pliant puppet that Zedekiah was. He had no mind and conscience and spinal column of his own, but simply did the bidding of his courtiers, or "the ring," as we would say.

There are still such mean men among us in political places and not there only, but also in other places, even ecclesiastical.

Few are the men who can stand up against "the bosses," especially of their own crowd, and bravely resist them and do the right. Pilate was such a coward at the trial of Jesus and he was not the last of his kind. Too often do men bend "the supple hinges of the knee" in the presence of wealth and prestige and power. On the other hand many a city has been saved in its fight for deliverance from corruption and even many a mob has been cowed by the brave stand of one man.

Let us be ready to stand and fight the good fight of faith and quit ourselves like men.

"Then took they Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchijah the king's son, that was in the court of the guard." It appears that this son of the king, otherwise unknown to us, had a private dungeon of his own, showing that he had corrupt influence with the king and was in a position to wreak private vengeance on his enemies. A weak king is likely to have a worse son and then it will go hard with the king's subjects.

"And they let Jeremiah down with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire; and Jeremiah sank in the mire." This private dungeon was evidently one of the cisterns of the jail, deep and containing mud at the bottom in which the prophet sank. It was a cruel and awful fate, and some have thought that the Sixty-ninth Psalm was written by him at this time or in recognition of his fate. It certainly voices his experience in vivid words:

Save me, O God;
For the waters are come in unto my soul.
I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing:
I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.
Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink.
And let not the pit shut its mouth upon me.
For Jehovah heareth the needy,
And despiseth not his prisoners.

Jeremiah was not the last prophet that has been cast into a deep and miry pit.

Many are the cries that come to us from those who are in deep pits of poverty and suffering and injustice, and we should be ready and sympathetic to hear the voice of their cry and extend to them any deliverance in our power.

3. A Black Man to the Rescue

Jeremiah's prayer was heard, and, as usual, it was answered through human means. Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian or Negro, was a servant in the king's house, and when he heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon, he made bold to speak unto the king about it. The black man came right to the point and boldly said, "My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet," and told the king that the prophet would die if he were left there.

The king over whom the Ethiopian servant had influence, as has often been the case with servants and their masters, acceded to Ebed-melech's plea and told him to take thirty (or possibly three) men with him and get Jeremiah out of the dungeon.

So a Negro saved this ancient prophet of God!

And has he not often proved a faithful servant and even a savior to this day? Was he not true to his white master's family in the Civil War? Has he not red blood in his veins that makes him brother to all men and does not his heart contain the milk of human kindness? How often have the black man's hands saved his white brother, and his kindness relieved his suffering? Then why this prejudice and persecution and outlawry that are so often visited upon him?

Give the black man a chance and give him brotherhood. Do not drive his children from the schools and inflict wrongs that will embitter his heart.

We are all members one of another and brothers in blood and children of the same family of God.

4. Old Clothes and Rags

Let us not overlook the thoughtful device of the Ethiopian for the comfort of the prophet. He gathered up some old clothes and rags and let them down with the ropes to Jeremiah in the deep dungeon and told him to put the rags under his armpits so that the cords would not cut into his flesh when he was drawn out.

This was a fine bit of forethought and tender care, such as a mother might exercise for her child, and suggests a beautiful lesson.

We should not only render service, but we should endeavor to do it in the most tactful and tender way. Our deeds should be ornamented with graciousness so as to make them more comfortable and beautiful.

Such little things are a deep revelation of character.

It is not our intended acts that reveal our real nature and spirit so much as the unconsidered trifles that attend our ways, the little, nameless, unremembered deeds of kindness and of love that are the best and most significant portion of a man's life.

In the parable Dives was condemned for the apparently small oversight of the beggar at his gate. His business books may have balanced and his reputation have been spotless, but his careless inattention to the beggar outweighed all his business integrity and stainless character.

Jesus said that for every idle word men shall speak they shall give account, and it may seem hard to be held responsible for such trifles as idle words. Yet such words slip out of the heart and may show as by a flash of light what is lurking unsuspected there. A tree is judged by every leaf that grows out of it because every leaf advertises the nature of the tree and infallibly stamps it as good or brands it as evil. Not only the things we do but also how we do them enter into their virtue. A kindly smile is an added grace and charm to the commonest deed as the fragrance of the broken alabaster box of ointment made the deed fine and beautiful.

This black man with his old clothes and rags set us an example in tender care and kindness and perfumed his act with a rare charm that persists to this day.

"Many a man might have hurried to the pit's mouth with ropes: only one of God's own gentlemen would have thought of the rags and clouts."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Name other prophets in the Scriptures and in history that have had a hard time in the world.
2. What can we do to stop cruelty in the world? Are many of our prisons places of horror?
3. How can we secure greater justice for the Negro?
4. Name other ways by which we can make common deeds beautiful.

LESSON X—JUNE 9

The Story of Rechabites (Temperance Lesson)

Lesson: Jeremiah 35:1–19.

Golden Text: We will drink no wine. Jeremiah 35:6.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 107:1–9.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Accepting a High Moral Standard.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Benefits of Total Abstinence.

Lesson Text: Jeremiah 35:5–11

5 And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites bowls full of wine, and cups; and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.

6 But they said, We will drink no wine; for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons, for ever:

7 Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land wherein ye sojourn.

8 And we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters;

9 Nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed:

10 But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.

11 But it came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians; so we dwell at Jerusalem.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***The Rechabites.***
2. ***The Temptation of the Rechabites.***
3. ***The Loyalty of the Rechabites.***
4. ***The Judgment Upon Judah.***
5. ***The Reward of the Rechabites.***

The episode recorded in our lesson is dated "in the days of Jehoiakim" and gives us a glimpse into the life of a group of Jews who maintained their simplicity of life and loyalty to their convictions amidst the growing degeneracy of the last days of Judah.

There are often eddies in the great rushing stream of civilization in which there are classes or groups of people who are backward

in some respects but in others are simpler and purer than the majority.

Such were the Puritans in England, the Essenes among the Jews in the time of Jesus, and the Rechabites in the days of the last kings of Judah.

1. The Rechabites

The Rechabites were a nomadic tribe of Kenite descent. In I Chron. 2:55 we read of "the Kenites that came of Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab." We meet with Kenites in Canaan in the days of Abraham (Gen. 15:19), and Hammath was probably a place in Naphtali where they had their seat.

The head of the tribe was Jonadab, the son of Rechab, and it may be that "Rechab," which means a "rider," is not a personal name but a designation of a clan of horsemen of the desert.

The tribe was intimately associated with the Israelites and its members were loyal worshipers of Jehovah.

The Rechabites did not settle down on farms with houses and vineyards, but they lived in tents and roamed around in search of fresh pasture for their cattle and flocks. Their life and customs were simple and severe and marked them off in sharp contrast to the artificial and luxurious life of the settled towns and cities. They were a primitive folk in the midst of a civilization materially progressive but morally decadent.

They stood out as protestants against the degeneracy of their age, the Puritans of their time.

When the Chaldeans came in successive waves of invasion into Judea, they were driven to find refuge in Jerusalem.

John the Baptist was an extreme illustration of one who abandoned society and went apart into the desert that he might keep himself isolated and immune from religious degeneracy.

Such a life of withdrawal from the world has its advantages, but in our day few of us can be so secluded; we must mingle with all sorts of people and meet life as we find it.

Our civilization and cities have their temptations, but they also have their great advantages. We should live in them and keep ourselves unspotted from them.

2. The Temptation of the Rechabites

The prophet Jeremiah used the Rechabites as an object lesson to impress upon the unfaithful inhabitants of Jerusalem the fact of their guilt and doom. He called them into the temple and set before them cups of wine and invited them to drink. He did not wish them to partake of the intoxicating drink; he knew that they would not, and so he was not really endeavoring to lead them into evil. He simply was testing their loyalty to their own sense of duty in order to use their faithfulness as a striking example for his own unfaithful people.

It was a test rather than a temptation to which he subjected them, so that in this act there was nothing blameworthy either in the prophet or in the Rechabites.

This test may be taken as illustrating the temptation to which we are exposed in our modern life.

We are immersed in a vast material civilization, which has its splendid achievements and advantages, but which also is mixed and tainted with manifold evils tempting us by worldly fashions and customs, excitements and pleasures, and especially by artificial stimulation of our nerves by intoxicants and drugs.

Its wealth and luxury appeal to our ambition and cupidity and tempt us to resort to unrighteous means of obtaining these things.

The wine cup is a fitting symbol of present-day temptations and is one of the most deadly dangers of our lives. It is wreathed with the roses of pleasure and music and art, with the fascination of subtle appeals to all our senses and appetites, and thus the snake in the bottom of it is concealed until the hour comes when it can strike its fatal fangs into its victim's blood and heart.

Every art and device of men is cunningly employed to enhance this temptation and lead us into its traps and ensnare us in body and in soul.

3. The Loyalty of the Rechabites

To the test of the prophet the Rechabites gave a noble reply: "We will drink no wine; for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons, for ever: neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard,

nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land wherein ye sojourn. And we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days."

The sincerity and firmness and loyalty to their ancestral faith and customs which mark this refusal must elicit our unreserved admiration.

In the midst of all the solicitations and pressure of evil in the city life in which they were temporarily immersed they would not in the least degree relax their simple and severe customs, and they nobly kept themselves unspotted. They were in the city and yet they were not of it. They were not afraid of being considered old-fashioned and out of date by reason of their primitive manners, and they were not ashamed to appeal to the authority of "our father." They were loyal to their own ancestral faith and life and were ready to stand for it against the world.

In this attitude they afford a worthy example for us.

We are somewhat in their condition as we are solicited to yield to many temptations that are even more dangerous than theirs.

It is well for us to be true to the teaching and example of our fathers.

It is true that we must have and obey our own convictions of truth and duty; but we should consider that wisdom did not begin with us and that our fathers trod many paths which are safe for our feet. To disown this accumulated wisdom in any field of life, most of all in the field of moral and spiritual truth, would be folly and fatality.

It is not a sign of unmanly dependence and weakness to be loyal to the instruction and example of our fathers; neither is it a sign of independence and smartness to disregard and trample upon their ways; rather, to disown them is rashness and folly and to follow their steps is safe guidance and strength.

We have the same power as the Rechabites to take a stand against evil and quit ourselves like men.

In our personal customs and companionships, in business and in society, we can refuse to share in any practice, habit, or custom, that

we believe to be wrong or attended with danger. However subtle and strong the solicitation and pressure that are put upon us, we can put our conscience and will against them, and beat them back and trample them under our feet.

Brave men have resisted these things unto blood; great souls have stood up against them like oaks against storms.

What others have done, we can do. It is in our power to win this victory; God will help us to do this thing.

There are many commands and promises in the Bible bidding us to fight this good fight and assuring us of this victory.

4. The Judgment Upon Judah

After the test of the Rechabites the prophet made an application of his object lesson to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He was bidden by Jehovah to remind the people of the fact that they had been taught early and late by many prophets who urged them to return from their evil ways: "but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me."

Therefore judgment was pronounced upon Judah and all the evil that had been threatened came upon them.

God will not be mocked, and all his judgments are sure. The same God that ruled over Judah rules over us, and his law and judgment have not changed.

Many prophets have been sent unto us.

The Old Testament prophecies and promises run forward into our life, and we enjoy also the great spiritual light of the New Testament in the person of Christ, our Sun of Righteousness. Responsibility is in proportion to light, and "to him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

We are children of the day; and if we live as children of darkness, our guilt will be very deep and our judgment correspondingly sore. If we yield to the temptations of ambition and greed, fashion and pleasure, of the wine cup and intoxicating drink, our judgment will come upon us in seared consciences and enslaving habits and soiled souls and wrecked lives.

We see such judgments stamped upon the faces and bodies, upon

the hearts and homes of men, in ruin that should frighten us away from any such course of sin. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

There is a disposition in our day, especially among young people, to think lightly of judgment and even to ridicule it as a scarecrow intended to frighten them, which has lost its ominous aspect and power, but this is the folly of sin that dulls the conscience and perverts the whole nature until it has itself lost the power of seeing the inexorable realities of law and judgment.

> The Bible did not make these laws and judgments but only records and illustrates them, and they would remain in full force were the Bible utterly destroyed and forgotten. The universe has something to say on these fundamental verities, its self-respect will not let them be denied and decried, the stars keep watch over them and the very constellations will fight for their enforcement.

5. The Reward of the Rechabites

As disobedience to the laws of God brings its sure judgment, so does obedience reap its appropriate reward. "And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he commanded you; therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever."

Was this promise really kept?

"Here as elsewhere," writes B. H. Bennett, "students of prophecy have been anxious to discover some literal fulfillment; and have searched curiously for any trace of the continued existence of the Rechabites. The notice in Chronicles implies that they formed part of the Jewish community of the Restoration. Apparently Alexandrian Jews were acquainted with Rechabites at a still later date. Psalm 71 is ascribed by the Septuagint to 'the sons of Jonadab.' Eusebius mentions 'priests of the sons of Rechab,' and Benjamin of Tudela, a Jewish traveler of the twelfth century, states that he met with them in Arabia. More recent travelers have thought that they discovered the descend-

ants of Rechab amongst the nomads of Arabia or the Peninsula of Sinai, that still practiced the old ancestral customs."

All such search and speculations are interesting, but the promises of God do not depend upon our unearthing obscure tribes in distant deserts.

His promises have a near and then a far fulfillment. They receive a limited application to those to whom they were immediately made and then sweep off over the horizon into immensely broader and more real spiritual fulfillments.

The genuine descendants of Rechab are found everywhere in the persons of those who walk in the same way of obedience to conscience and truth and God. All who refuse to violate their sense of duty are the sons of Rechab, and their reward standeth sure.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why are we so afraid to violate social customs?
2. Are such customs of great use in the world?
3. Are the Quakers similar people to the Rechabites?
4. Is it fact or fiction that the stars fight for righteousness?
5. Are you satisfied with the explanation that conscientious souls to-day are the descendants of the Rechabites and fulfill the promise made to them?

LESSON XI—JUNE 16

Judah Taken Captive

Lesson: II Kings 25:1–21.

Golden Text: Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people. Proverbs 14:34.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 107:10–16.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Paying the Price of Sinning.

Topic for Young People and Adults: National Accountability to God.

Lesson Text: II Kings 25: 1–12

1 And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and encamped against it; and they built forts against it round about.

2 So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

3 On the ninth day of the *fourth* month the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land.

4 Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war *fled* by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden (now the Chaldeans were against the city round about); and *the king* went by the way of the Arabah.

5 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him.

6 Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him.

7 And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

8 Now in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem.

9 And he burnt the house of Jehovah, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, even every great house, burnt he with fire.

10 And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were *with* the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

11 And the residue of the people that were left in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the residue of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away captive.

12 But the captain of the guard left of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Zedekiah the Puppet King.

2. Human Rebellion and Divine Wrath.

3. Babylonians at the Gate.
4. The Breach in the Walls.
5. Captivity and Night.

The catastrophe has arrived which has long been approaching.

The fall of a capital which carries down with it an empire is a world event.

The fall of Rome shattered the world for a thousand years, and the fall of Constantinople in the fifteenth century again shook Europe and entered into its events for half a millennium. Hardly yet have the echoes died away from the most stupendous convulsion of history in which five historic empires and many cities came crashing down in one vast heap of ruin. Constantinople and Jerusalem were also involved in the Great War, and Jerusalem again fell into Christian hands.

The destruction of Jerusalem under its last king, Zedekiah, was one of the most awful and pitiful of national tragedies, not only in the agony of suffering that attended it, but also in the eclipse of religious hopes.

Yet the city was burned that out of its ashes might arise a new and better Jerusalem which should receive the Messiah and prepare the way for the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God on earth.

In this lesson we witness the last spark of its glory expire in darkness. Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah—these are the short swift steps from the great and good Josiah down into a Babylonian jail.

1. Zedekiah the Puppet King

Zedekiah is the vanishing point in this diminishing series. He was the son of Josiah, the full brother of Jehoahaz, the half-brother of Jehoiakim and the uncle of Jehoiachin.

It is strange that a chain of such weak links was suspended from so strong a support, but heredity often works in the dark and produces unexpected and unexplainable results.

Perhaps the mother was the source of weakness in this line of degeneration, and yet it is rarely safe to blame the mother.

The times were against these men; they were floating on the flood of corruption that was heading towards its Niagara—what could they do? Zedekiah is to be pitied for his weakness more than he is to be blamed for his wickedness.

Nevertheless the fatal record stands written against him, "He did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah" (24:19): the same monotonous record that has occurred in this history in wearisome repetition.

The power of evil to project itself down upon sons and successors is one of the fatal threads in the complicated web of human existence; but then the good has the same power and in a still higher degree, so that the account is not one-sided and is more than balanced.

It was no excuse, however, for Zedekiah to quote his predecessors or his mother in justification of his course, for he himself "did evil in the sight of Jehovah." Heredity gives a man a tendency or push in the direction of good or evil, but he need not and does not go either way until he chooses his own path.

No one ever sins until he consents, and in the consent lies the sin.

2. Human Rebellion and Divine Wrath

It also stands written against Zedekiah that he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar (II Chron. 36:13). This marks the blindness and folly of Zedekiah's course. The king of Babylon had carried off Jehoiachin and put Zedekiah in his place, and yet the puppet king presently presumed to rebel against his mighty master and thereby sealed his doom. We do not need to go so far back to find such exhibition of the blindness and insanity of sin.

Sin still breeds conceit and vanity and rashness and leads many a man to make a fool of himself.

Imagining himself free and strong and clever, the evildoer plunges into some reckless course of conduct and hopelessly enmeshes himself in the net of his own folly.

After rebellion the next word we look for in the record is wrath, and, sure enough, here it is: "The wrath of Jehovah arose against his people" (II Chron. 36:15). Divine wrath follows human rebellion as

an explosion follows ignited powder, as lightning follows the electric overloading of a cloud.

The Lord is not an impassive spectator of human evil, but he sits in judgment over it and expresses his judgment in condemnation and fiery bolts.

The Lord restrained his wrath and let things go to such length in Jerusalem that he cast Judah into the pit of Babylonian captivity. That is a seemingly peculiar way for divine judgment to work and yet it is one of the most fearful things that judgment can do. The worst thing a bad man can ask for himself is to be let alone: no lightning bolt of judgment then need fall from heaven: he will do the work of judgment and wreak vengeance on himself.

Sin is separation, and to be cast out from the presence of the Lord is the final end and deepest judgment of sin.

3. Babylonians at the Gate

Zedekiah's rebellion started the march of the terrible Babylonian hosts across the hot plains, and in the tenth month of the ninth year of his reign they arrived at Jerusalem and shut it up in a state of siege.

Then began a scene of horror such as is rarely if ever witnessed in our modern warfare.

A cordon of camps was pitched around the city and every avenue of escape was tightly closed. Forts were built around it, probably movable towers provided with battering rams that could be pushed up to the walls so as to scale them and beat them down. Inside the beleaguered city was a state of famine and starvation and death that passes the power of the pen to describe or the heart to pity. The people became shadows and skinny skeletons that fought like wild beasts for crumbs of bread. The wealthiest citizens and richly-dressed ladies searched heaps of refuse for scraps of food. Riots made the streets slippery with blood. Mothers killed and ate their own children. The last human instinct perished and only beasts were left.

This awful siege drew from Jeremiah the heart-breaking sighs and sobs of his Lamentations, the "In Memoriam" of the Bible, the most woeful funeral dirge in the literature of the world. "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people!" "Their visage is blacker

than coal, they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones, it is withered, it is become like a stick. They that are slain with the sword are better than they that are slain with hunger. The hands of the pitiful women have boiled their own children."

Jeremiah passed through this siege and writes as an eyewitness and personal sufferer.

Sin does some terrible work.

It can take a great city and turn it into a fermenting, festering, fighting mass of corruption and violence and cruelty and death, a plague spot of horrors, a fiery splotch of Hell, and what it can do with a multitudinous city, it can also do with a single soul.

4. The Breach in the Walls

Day after day and month after month for a year and a half the Babylonians held the wretched, starving, dying city in their grasp, ever tightening their grip and squeezing the life out of its gasping body. Their battering rams ever kept pounding against the walls and gates and every day the final awful doom drew nearer.

At last a breach was made through a gate or wall, and the iron-faced, stony-hearted host that had so long been the terror of the Jews poured into their holy and beautiful city.

Jerusalem's repeated rebellion had now marked it for total destruction.

Soon after its fall Nebuchadnezzar sent a captain to carry out this work. The city was set on fire and presently was a mass of flames. Temple and palace and humble home were enwrapped in one common conflagration and were soon ashes. The walls were broken down, and only a great smoking ash-heap was left to crown the holy hill of Zion, while all the treasures of brass and gold were carried off to Babylon.

This was the end of the city that sat there on that height of privilege and power so defiant and scornful in its idolatry and guilt.

So did Rome utterly destroy Carthage as a nest of Semitic cruelty and a constant menace to the imperial city, and so have other capitals of pride and cruelty gone into the graveyard of history. Judgment sometimes seems a long time in coming, but at last it does arrive and set things right.

Many are the nations and cities whose ruins remain as mournful monuments of their decline and fall.

Any nation that lifts itself up in pride and threatens and scorns other nations and tramples upon the laws of civilization is heading towards a terrible downfall, as the latest pages of history proclaim in trumpet tones. It is written across all the past that the nation that forgets God shall perish.

The same judgment is written against our personal sins, and it is equally certain that the soul that sinneth shall die.

Fools mock at sin, but this is sign and proof of their folly and only heightens their own fall and condemnation. A day is coming when many a wrong, national and personal, will register its retribution in flames of fire and leave only ashes to tell the story of its guilt and folly.

5. Captivity and Night

As the Babylonians poured into the city, probably through the northern gate, the Jews escaped, probably through a southern gate, and made for the Jordan valley, rushing pell-mell down the steep defiles into the plain below. The Babylonians, however, were not in the habit of letting their prey escape. They had come there to stamp out that Judean plague spot and menace on the western border of their empire, verily Jehovah himself had sent them there on that mission, and they would make a final job of it while they were at it.

Zedekiah was quickly captured down at Jericho, and he and his sons and his princes were taken up to Riblah, north of Damascus, where Nebuchadnezzar had his headquarters, while his generals were simultaneously besieging Jerusalem and Tyre. The miserable puppet that had so foolishly rebelled against his maker and master was now brought into the presence of the mighty monarch.

There was no mercy in those days for such treacherous subjects.

Cruelties were cunningly devised and refined to prolong and intensify the agony. First, Nebuchadnezzar took Zedekiah's sons and slew them before their father's eyes; then he slew his princes. This was simply preparatory. Then the conquered king was forced to kneel before his master, and Nebuchadnezzar, taking a spear, jabbed it first into one and then into the other eye of Zedekiah and forevermore

blotted out his vision and left two bloody holes. Finally, the unhappy king was bound in chains and carried to Babylon, where he lingered in prison until released by death.

Two apparently discrepant prophecies were remarkably fulfilled in his fate. Jeremiah prophesied: "Thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon" (34:3). And Ezekiel prophesied: "I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there" (12:13).

We may be thankful that we live in a more humane age and a happier land.

Bad as is war to-day and in some respects more terrible in its slaughter than it was in that ancient time, yet it has been brought under some restraint of international law and humanity.

Yet sin is no kinder now than it was then, and we deceive ourselves if we think it is.

It still jabs out eyes, the very eyes of the soul, and its wages still is death. Many a man walks in blindness and bondage as dark as that of Babylonian captivity and night, though he may still laugh and mock at sin. We should be wiser than to think that we can mock God and escape his law of reaping what we sow.

Only they truly see who have the light of life in their souls and walk in a safe path who follow him who is the Light of the world.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. In what sense are we all kings?
2. Is rebellion against human law always a sin against God?
3. What enemies are besieging the citadels of our souls?
4. Are there different kinds and degrees of blindness?
5. What fate befell Babylon?

LESSON XII—JUNE 23

A Psalm of Praise

Lesson: Psalm 103:1–22.

Golden Text: Bless Jehovah, O my soul. Psalm 103:1.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 107:23–31.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Privilege of Worshiping God.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Habit of Thankfulness.

Lesson Text: Psalm 103:1–13

1 Bless Jehovah, O my soul;
And all that is within me, *bless* his holy name.
2 Bless Jehovah, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits:
3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies;
5 Who satisfieth thy desire with good things.
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle.
6 Jehovah executeth righteous acts,
And judgments for all that are oppressed.
7 He made known his ways unto Moses,
His doings unto the children of Israel.
8 Jehovah is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness.
9 He will not always chide;
Neither will he keep *his anger* for ever.
10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.
11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is his loving-kindness toward them that fear him.
12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
13 Like as a father pitieth his children,
So Jehovah pitieth them that fear him.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Jehovah's Benefits.

2. Forgiveness and Healing.

3. Satisfied Desires.

4. Righteousness Executed.

5. Divine Anger.

6. Like as a Father.

Praise is comely. It is a beautiful exercise and adornment of the spirit.

Ingratitude is everywhere a base state of soul, but thankfulness is a fine virtue, grateful to others and promoting the health and happiness of ourselves.

Praise is a large and prominent element in our worship, and the Jews abounded in this spirit. The book of Psalms was their hymn-book and its songs so often jubilant in praise still give words and wings to our souls.

1. Jehovah's Benefits

The psalmist calls upon his soul and all that is within him to bless Jehovah " and forget not all his benefits."

How prone we are to forget the things we ought to remember, and to remember the things we should forget?

The good things of our life are often so abundant and constant that we lose our sense of their presence and value and we come to accept and use them as a matter of course without ever giving a thought to the hand that bestows them upon us or to the appreciation of their own worth. We use them as unconsciously as we use the air we breathe and the sunlight in which we walk. But if we were deprived of air and light, we would suddenly appreciate them and find that they are our very life.

Some things we should forget, our own mistakes and also our successes and especially should we forget the faults of others, but the benefits of God we should not forget.

We should live and move and have our being in him, bathed in his presence. This does not mean that we should always and constantly have God in mind, for this would be a fixed idea or obsession that might become insanity, but we should be subconsciously aware of him and at times turn our conscious thoughts to him.

The psalmist calls upon his soul and all that is within him to forget not Jehovah's benefits.

He stirs up the deeps of his soul, he arouses all his memories and associated ideas to bring these benefits flocking into his soul.

Our ideas all cling together and when one comes into the field of consciousness it brings in other related ideas with it and this process

goes on until the whole content of consciousness enlarges and enriches the idea and makes it the glowing spot of the soul.

We can stir up these deeps by meditating upon a subject until it kindles the soul into a glorious state of exaltation. Then are we carried on wings of worship up to the heights of praise.

2. Forgiveness and Healing

It is interesting to note what the psalmist was thankful for, especially what he put first and made fundamental among his benefits. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities:" he does not begin with material goods but with the spiritual state of his soul in being forgiven and cleansed.

He could not be happy until sin was washed out of his heart and he had a pure spirit as the fountain of all true blessings.

The center must be in the right place before any point on the circumference can be where it ought to be, and we cannot be truly thankful until we have a good soul to be thankful with.

Are we as sensitive on this point as this ancient psalmist?

Are we losing our sense of sin because it is being dulled by our modern laxity or drowned out in a sea of worldliness? Then we need to stir up our consciences that we may be aware of our sin and desire forgiveness and cleansing as the primary blessing and condition of all other blessings.

Yet the psalmist was not indifferent to material goods and immediately passes to the healing of the body.

Jehovah "healeth all thy diseases." How does he do this? We will not say that he does not do this at times by a special intervention and we are not to suppose that "faith cures" are all fancies.

In truth faith is an immense fact in our bodily condition and generally and sometimes decisively enters into our healing.

However, God works through human means and what are all our wonderful advances in the science of medicine and health but the working of God in this field?

Does not he lead men into a knowledge of this art and create all the curative elements that make our medicines? Is not the hospital

an annex of the church as a means of carrying out the gospel of redemption from all sickness, of the body as well as of the soul? Did Jesus preach and practice only a fractional gospel of the soul and leave the body untouched in its disease and misery?

Not so, God is the great Physician and the healing of the seamless dress of his Son is still by our beds of pain.

Jesus walks up and down the earth and lays his healing hand on our bodily ills, and all our wonderful discoveries and arts by which we are conquering disease and banishing some diseases from our world and lengthening life and greatly increasing its health and happiness are but the presence and work of God healing all our diseases.

3. Satisfied Desires

"Who satisfieth thy desire with good things."

Jehovah does this also, broadening out the stream of his goodness so that it flows around our incompleteness and fills it full.

We have many desires but they are not all wholesome and good. Desires are among our greatest dangers as they may lure us with their red lights into pitfalls of destruction. On the other hand, desires are the mainsprings of progress driving us forward towards our goals of worthy ambition. Duty itself will not appeal to us and be an inward impulse until it moves in the groove of desire and becomes our delight.

These worthy desires are to be cherished and motivated so that they will grow into strength and enable us to do our best in reaching their satisfaction.

Our desires rise on a scale of value from the lowest physical to the highest spiritual need and attainment.

God has provided for the proper satisfaction of all our rightful desires.

They are like instincts which always find their appropriate means. The bird finds air for its wings and food for its young. We have desires for air and food and drink and clothing, and corresponding with these are the boundless atmosphere and fields of grain and springs and streams and fibers that can be woven into webs.

God did not create in us these fundamental physical needs and then forget to supply them with means of satisfaction.

On the next higher level we have mental desires for truth, and the whole world is our great book for us to study and master. The very universe is our school and never shall we slake to satiated satisfaction our thirst for knowledge. We have natures that crave society and love, and God hath set us in families and bound us together by many social ties.

The highest desire was felt and expressed by the psalmist when he said, " One thing have I desired of the Lord that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

This is the greatest thirst and search of the human soul and calls for the very water of life without which it will perish.

God has provided this water of life in boundless fulness in himself and it flows out upon us through his Son. He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst. It is supplied freely and the invitation is, " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Thus up through the whole scale of our rightful desires God is he " Who satisfieth thy desire with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle."

The satisfaction of some desires eats up our life and makes us old, but the satisfaction of these true desires sustains our life and keeps us young.

4. Righteousness Executed

We do not go far in the Bible until we encounter the fact and duty of righteousness, for this is the rock on which goodness must be built or it is not good. " Jehovah executeth righteous acts, and judgments for all that are oppressed."

God executes righteous acts because he is righteous and out of his heart are all the issues of his life.

Righteous acts are those that conform to right, they are straight as opposed to that which is crooked, they always give a square deal

Any other kind of acts even though they came from the hand of God would dethrone his right to reign and wreck the universe. God being upright himself in all his thoughts and ways is a God whom we can trust, with whom we can deal and be sure that we will get justice and right.

Any other God we could not trust, and an unrighteous God, could there be such, would be unworthy of our respect and we would defy him to his face.

His righteous acts are specially exhibited in "judgments for all that are oppressed." Oppression of the weak by the strong, of the poor by the rich, is especially cruel in our human world and is above all things hateful to God.

All human beings are his children, and whoever injures one of them attacks God, and no one can hurt one of his believing children without touching the apple of his eye, the most sensitive part of him.

Injustice is a prevalent and deep wrong, but ever standeth God within the shadow keeping watch above his own, and for every unjust act shall every one give account unto him.

5. Divine Anger

The fair picture of God is apparently darkened for a moment as there falls upon it a shadow of divine anger. Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, but let us not think he is a soft God and will let our injustice and defiance of his righteousness escape unwhipped of justice. Let us not presume too far or in any degree upon his patience as though the great Avenger would ever be careless, for "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever."

He may keep it for a time in his great patience and mercy, but there comes a time and point when he will restrain it no longer but will let it have its perfect work.

But is anger consistent with God's perfection?

Is it not an imperfection and often a grievous sin with us? Are we not told to let not the sun go down on our wrath? Yes, but it may be very proper until sundown and then it should cool off. Anger often is an infirmity and a sin with us, but not always.

It is a necessary strand in the complex web of our character and one of the safeguards of our world.

A man that could feel no indignation against wrong would be a weak personality.

Wrath is the correlative of right, the other side of justice, the back of its sword that gives weight and driving force to its cutting edge.

And so is it with God. Wash all the wrath out of the nature of God and it would be left colorless and limp.

The universe would not respect such a God.

There is no danger that God will ever fly into a passion of anger with us, but there is a certainty that God is angry with the wicked every day.

It is still a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God, and his very love only makes his anger the more sorrowful and should make us the more unwilling to excite and incur it.

6. Like as a Father

Our lesson closes on a high and fine note. "Like as a father pitieth his children, Jehovah pitieth them that fear him." We know how precious is our human fatherhood, caring for us in our weakness, patient with us, and providing all our needs. But human fatherhood at its fairest and best is only a faint reflection of our divine Fatherhood, a drop out of the infinite Fatherly heart of God.

This is our deepest faith, this undergirds the universe with the assurance that it is friendly towards us, this is our trust and peace.

When in doubt and distress let us put our trust in the Fatherhood of our God and then we shall ever praise him and sing songs in the night.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Have you ever tried to write down a list of your benefits?
2. Can we really be thankful in times of loss and sorrow?
3. Can we be thankful for loss and sorrow?
4. What are the things for which we should be most thankful?
5. Was Jesus thankful? When and what for?

LESSON XIII—JUNE 30

Review: Prophets and Kings of Judah's Decline

Golden Text: I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. Jeremiah 31:3.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 130.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: True and False Leaders.

Topic for Young People and Adults: God's True Prophets.

The Bible starts with the general stream of world history and successively narrows its field to a single nation, and in this Quarter we study at close view the southern division of this nation after it was split in two by the secession of the northern tribes.

1. The Ministry of Isaiah

Isaiah was easily the greatest of the Hebrew prophets and was a man of commanding genius who shed the brilliance of his intellect and spiritual imagination down upon us.

He saw a vision in the temple, which is a good place to see such disclosures of spiritual truth.

Jehovah stood revealed to him in the midst of angels exalting his holiness. Instantly the prophet was smitten with a sense of his unclean lips, for this is the proper reaction of the soul in the presence of holiness. A coal from the altar touched to his lips cleansed them and he was assured that his iniquity was forgiven.

Clean lips become every prophet, and the lips are a door out of which come the issues of life and reveal the inmost depths of the heart.

Cleansing was logically followed by a call to service, and never was this call more clearly voiced than it is to-day.

Still stands the kingdom of God only faintly outlined against the sky and we are called as workmen to build its walls.

An instance of the service to which the prophet was called was the healing of Hezekiah the king and healing the sick is still a large part of the ministry of Christianity.

2. Hezekiah Leads His People Back to God

At its lowest point of spiritual declension Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah. He began his reign by reviving the worship of Jehovah, inviting the northern tribes "to come to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem."

The house of the Lord is a common mercy-seat where all differences should disappear and melt into one mind.

Although the proper time for the passover feast had passed, yet they celebrated it "otherwise than it is written," showing that they knew how to relax the letter in order that the spirit might be observed. An interesting glimpse is given into the ancient postal delivery as couriers went out through the land calling the people to this great national religious ceremony.

The appeal thus sent out breathes a beautiful and winning spirit.

It is along these same lines that God approaches us in Christ and that we should strive to compose all our differences and divisions. The invitation to a national celebration of the feast was "laughed to scorn" in Israel.

This is the fatality of wrongdoing: it reacts upon conscience and deadens it into insensibility and becomes a fixed and final habit.

However, the feast was kept and "there was great joy in Jerusalem."

3. Comfort for God's People

Both Israel and Judah were swept over the precipice of captivity, and the Jews were now in bitter bondage in Babylon. But the morning is approaching and the prophet is now discerning the first gleam of the new day.

Comfort was the first note of his message.

The captives had paid dearly for their waywardness and it was welcome news that they were pardoned. Comfort is one of the most universal needs of the world and it is afforded to us abundantly through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Comfort having been given there follows the call to prepare the way of the Lord.

Rarely can comfort come as long as we remain inactive, but there is always something for us to do to open a way for its coming.

This road would lead to the revealing of "the glory of Jehovah." The glory of the Lord may not have been visible in these few captives struggling across the desert to Jerusalem, but the fruitage to-day is the glory of Israel in its literature and life and its supreme blossom is the full glory of Jesus.

The message closes with good tidings that are to be proclaimed in Jerusalem, and these tidings are now reverberating around the world.

4. The Suffering Servant of Jehovah

In the next lesson we have a suggestive picture of a Servant of God suffering in his service.

The picture had a near fulfillment in the righteous remnant of Israel and a far and final fulfillment in the suffering Christ.

This servant is first presented as despised and rejected as nearly all prophets are. The portrait is drawn so true to Christ that it would seem it was painted from life.

Every servant of God fulfills in some degree this description.

He is next presented as the Humble Servant and again the picture is true to Christ.

Great souls are usually humble and this is one mark of their greatness.

But the passage like a great strain of music now returns to the Victorious Servant and closes on the keynote with a full diapason. The sufferings of the Servant shall not be purposeless and fruitless.

He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, and this reward will accumulate through the ages and culminate in his final crown of glory.

5. What Hilkiah Found in the Temple

A book had been lost and this book was the Bible or a portion of it, probably the book of Deuteronomy. It was found in the temple.

There are many lost Bibles in the world, and probably we could find one in our own house.

When found the book was read to the king, and still the king needs to have this book read to him.

On hearing it he was seized with a panic of fear, and well he might be and well might we, for this book contains the highest laws of life which we cannot forget and violate without grave consequences.

The book also needed interpretation as it still does and this is the special work of the minister and teacher.

To whom was the book taken?

To a woman!

And why not? Is she not still an interpreter of God's word and will and should we not hear her voice?

The king then took a pledge "to walk after Jehovah and to keep his commandments," and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to its covenant.

Happy the city and the people that read this book so as to keep its laws and trust its promises. They shall prosper and peace shall be within their palaces.

6. The Early Ministry of Jeremiah

Jeremiah was one of the last prophets of Judah and saw it go into captivity in Babylon. The prophet presented his credentials authorizing him to speak in the name of Jehovah.

"I am with thee," said Jehovah and this was authority sufficient for any task.

However the people were enraged against him, and this has been a common fate of the prophet, whether in Jerusalem or in Athens or in America.

Jeremiah stood his ground and would not abate a single syllable.

It still takes courage to be a prophet.

A mob was about to destroy Jeremiah, but the princes restrained it. This is one danger of democracy, and it must have strong men to control it. The elders appealed to history to restrain mob action, and history is full of lessons and warnings for us.

The mob spirit is especially one of the dangerous and disgraceful features of our American life and we need to take vigorous measures to check and stop it.

7. Jeremiah Calls to Obedience

The prophet sat at the gate of the house of Jehovah to proclaim the word of the Lord, and the house of the Lord is the proper place to declare the divine wisdom and will.

What did the prophet declare in the house of the Lord? "Amend your ways, and your doings," and no more fitting message can be given to-day.

The people were warned to "trust not in lying words," and how many false words are still being uttered to deceive us?

They were charged with having turned the house of the Lord "into a den of robbers." Woe unto the church that thus harbors and throws its cloak over individual and social iniquity.

Let every one look into his own church and pew and seat and see that it is cleansed of all such wrong.

Obedience and not sacrifice is declared by the prophet to be the desire and demand of Jehovah, and this is the service he wants to-day.

8. God's Law in the Heart

The prophet insists on individual responsibility. Our teeth shall not be set on edge because our fathers ate sour grapes.

A great promise is then held up in "the days to come."

"I will make a new covenant," and God always has new and better things in store for us.

We have left behind the old covenant of Moses and have come into the glorious liberty of Christ.

A feature of the new covenant is that the law is to be put in the inward parts, it is to be wrought into the disposition and habit so that it will act with unconscious ease and spontaneity. Then the knowledge of the Lord shall spread until it becomes an inheritance and all shall grow up in it and know no other life.

It is further shown that law and grace are not antagonistic but play into and complement each other.

9. Later Experiences of Jeremiah

The last days of Judah are now approaching and the prophet is caught in a hard situation. His words were reported to the king and a demand was made that he should be put to death, a penalty that the prophet has often paid. He was cast into a pit of mud and sank in its mire.

But somebody had pity on him and who was it? A black man!

He went to the king with words of warning and was told to get the prophet out. He took ropes and some old clothes and rags and, putting the rags under the prophet's arms so that the ropes would not cut into his flesh, he drew him out of the horrible place.

It was a fine touch of thoughtfulness and tenderness by which he adorned his act with grace. We should not only do good deeds, but should also do them in a beautiful way.

10. The Story of the Rechabites

The Rechabites were a pastoral people who lived in tents and roamed about in search of pasture for their flocks. To preserve their simple manners and life they planted no vineyards and pledged themselves to drink no wine.

They were the Puritans of that ancient day.

Jeremiah brought them into the temple and offered them wine to test their faithfulness to their fathers' ways.

They stood the test nobly and were faithful to their ancient customs.

Jeremiah used them as an example with which to show Judah its unfaithfulness in not hearkening unto Jehovah and warned them of judgment.

There is conveyed in this ancient story a much-needed lesson in our day when wealth and luxury and fashion and pleasure are relaxing our faith and morals and carrying us downstream.

The Rechabites were assured of their reward, and we shall not lose ours if we follow them in this path.

11. Judah Taken Captive

Its inevitable fate overtook Judah. Zedekiah was its last king and he was so foolish as to rebel against his Babylonian master. This human rebellion brought divine wrath.

The Babylonians presently were thundering at the gates of Jerusalem, and awful scenes ensued when the city was shut up tight.

Famine and misery passing description held it in its grip.

A breach in the walls let the enemy in, and temple and palace and hut went up in smoke and left a heap of ashes.

The miserable people were taken captives and started on their long journey in chains to Babylon, and Zedekiah had a fate more dreadful than death.

Sin is no kinder now than it was then.

12. A Psalm of Praise

The book of Psalms was the hymnbook of the Jews and contains many of the finest hymns that ever were written.

Praise is a dominant note in them, for amidst all their tragedies and sorrows the Jews were a singing people and could sing songs in the night.

They sang of forgiveness and healing and found every good desire was satisfied. Divine righteousness was the rock on which they placed the throne of God.

They knew that anger is a thread in the character of God, but they nestled in his everlasting arm and knew him as their Father.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Name the lessons of the Quarter with their topics.
2. Name the kings that appear in these lessons.
3. What were the distinctive characteristics of Isaiah and of Jeremiah?
4. How could such a degenerate people be the chosen people of God?

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD QUARTER

The Third Quarter carries on the decline of Judah over the precipice of the fall down into captivity and the turn of events when the way was opened for the return of the captives to their own city and the rebuilding of its ruins.

Exile and restoration are the outstanding events.

Exile is a bitter prospect for any person or nation, but it may be turned to good uses and made a very means of grace. It is an affliction that is not at first joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterward it may yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

It had this effect in a large way with the Jews.

They went down into captivity a narrow-minded and proud people with the flattering unction laid thick on their souls that they were the people; and they also had fallen into luxury and vice, and idolatry was eating cancerlike into their worship. This idolatry was bleached and washed out of them by their experience of the degradation of it in Babylon, and they were also humbled in their pride and had their narrow provincial views broadened into a sense of the greater world than their own little country.

And so Babylon was another chapter in their education as Egypt had been in earlier days.

Out of exile came restoration when they were given another chance and did better. Their power was broken and never again did they pose and rule as a world empire, but they walked more humbly with their God and their worship was spiritualized and they were better prepared for the coming of their Messiah.

They made mistakes for which they suffered bitterly, but with all their temptations and trials and tears they were the chosen people of God who clung to him and at many points set us a worthy example. They labored and we are entered into their labors.

Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi—these are the great names and leaders of this period, and each of these was a tower of strength and guidance to them and to us. In their light let us study the ways of God in the world.

THIRD QUARTER

PROPHETIC TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP OF JUDAH

THE EXILE AND THE RESTORATION

(Second Half of a Six Months' Course)

Aim: To lead the pupils in discovering and appreciating how God, through prophets and other leaders, gave help and guidance to the people of Judah, in order that the pupils may come to see the hand of God in their own lives and in all human affairs.

LESSON I—JULY 7

The Story of Ezekiel

Lesson: Ezekiel 1:1–3; 2:1–3:27; 8:1–4; 11:22–25; 24:15–24; 33:30–33.

Golden Text: As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Ezekiel 33:11.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 121.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Frankness in Friendship.

Topic for Young People and Adults: A Prophet Pastor.

Lesson Text: Ezekiel 3:4–11; 24:15–18

4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.

5 For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel;

6 Not to many peoples of a strange speech and of a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, if I sent thee to them, they would hearken unto thee.

7 But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stiff heart.

8 Behold, I have made thy face hard against their faces, and thy forehead hard against their foreheads.

9 As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thy heart, and hear with thine ears.

11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

15 Also the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,
16 Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet thou shalt neither mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down.
17 Sigh, but not aloud, make no mourning for the dead; bind thy headtire upon thee, and put thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men.
18 So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. Speak with My Words.
2. To the House of Israel.
3. A Hard Forehead and a Stiff Heart.
4. Words Received in the Heart.
5. The Desire of Thine Eyes.

Ezekiel was a prophet in Jerusalem who was taken captive when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in 597 B. C. and was carried along with other inhabitants to Babylon where he lived among and prophesied to the exiles. The final fall and destruction of Jerusalem under the attack of Nebuchadnezzar occurred eleven years later in 586 B. C.

Ezekiel is a difficult book to read and understand as it is highly ritualistic and symbolical making much of it seem mechanical and obscure to modern readers. Yet Ezekiel had imagination and many splendid passages occur in his pages, such as the brilliant picture of the downfall of Tyre as a gallant ship richly furnished and rowed out to sea to go down in a terrible storm in Chapter 27, and the vision of the valley of dry bones in Chapter 37.

Our lesson shows us how hard-hearted and stiff-necked the captive Jews still were in Babylon.

1. Speak with My Words

The prophet received the command and mission, "Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them." He had to go after his hearers and not wait for them to come unto him, and we still go after people when we want to get their hearing or support or trade, and the solicitor has become a recognized factor in the business world.

Jesus sent his disciples out into the highways and hedges to compel people to come in, and we must use the same psychology and business

enterprise in getting people to hear the gospel and in gathering them into the church and kingdom of God.

The minister must go after converts and church members and the teacher after scholars and this personal evangelism is the most effective way in which the vital leaven of the gospel spreads through the mass of society.

The prophet, however, was not left without a message and this message was not anything he might say himself but was definitely committed to words for him. "Speak with my words," said the Spirit to him.

These words, however, had been derived from the roll which the prophet had eaten, an act symbolizing the fact that the words of the inspired roll of writing had passed into his own mind and heart and now came forth as the words of the Lord.

We are still given words to speak and are not sent to speak words of our own wisdom and speculation.

This is an important restriction upon and guide to the message we give in our preaching and teaching. The meaning is not that we are mechanically to repeat the words of Scripture, but that Scripture is to give shape and substance and spirit to our message as contrasted with any message that is simply born of science or art or philosophy.

In a true sense the words we speak are to be the words of God announcing his message of salvation to men and carrying with them his authority and truth and grace.

2. To the House of Israel

This message was to be delivered to the house of Israel and the point emphasized is that they were not people of a strange speech who would not understand the prophet and whom he could not understand, but they all spoke a common tongue and could understand each other.

God condescends to speak to us in our own language and this puts a large human element into his message.

The whole Bible is written in our speech so that we can read it either in the original or as translated into our language and this brings it home to us as a human as well as a divine book. This is an immense

privilege that we enjoy and we should appreciate it and read and mark and meditate upon a book in which God speaks to us.

This is part of the process by which God reasons together with us and uses our language and our logic.

It lays upon us as ministers and teachers the corresponding obligation of presenting our message in such language as can be understood by our hearers and pupils. If we fly over their heads or go under their feet with theological or obscure or muddled ideas and words that they do not understand it is very much the same as though we spoke to them in an unknown tongue.

We may rant and roar in the pulpit and talk volubly before the class and think we are heard for our much speaking, when we may be making no impression on any mind or heart because we are not sending clear, clean-cut words home to their business and bosoms.

It is also our duty to help translate the Bible into other tongues so that all the people in the world may read and hear it in their own speech. It is now translated into about eight hundred languages, and this work is still going on and in time every tribe speaking any dialect can hear and understand the gracious message of the gospel.

3. A Hard Forehead and a Stiff Heart

The prophet was warned that he would not have an easy task in getting his message into the minds of his people. In fact, "the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stiff heart."

Very hard people to deal with were these captive Jews.

It might have been thought that they would have been whipped into a state of submission and humility and would have been ready to hear any word of reproof and instruction. But not so: they were still hard-faced and stiff-necked and would have none of the prophet's reproof.

Human nature is often very obdurate and does not improve under punishment but rather hardens its front.

We know this ourselves and are often ready to bristle up and show our teeth when criticised and brought to book.

This is a discouragement that often confronts the preacher and teacher and they should not be surprised at it.

Jesus himself met and bore every form of contradiction and persecution and the disciple need not expect better treatment than his Master.

But what was the prophet to do? He was himself to harden his own forehead and stiffen his own neck.

There is a sense in which this would be bad advice, for a fighting spirit will not win the foe and anger will not cure anger. Yet in the sense obviously intended the instruction is good: the prophet was not to be cowed and conquered by any such spirit but was himself to meet it with a resolute face and an undiscouraged and unbending will.

The preacher should not be a soft and pliant man, ready to retreat before any opposition, but should stand his ground and quit himself like a man. He should have some firmness and force of personality, some stiffness of backbone that will not yield to every show of opposition and threat of persecution on the part of enemies or his people.

Jesus could be tender and gracious as the gentlest mother with her child, and yet also he could flash out against hypocritical Pharisees and ecclesiastics and scorn and scorch them as with flames of fire. There are times when such men are much needed, and every Christian should have some of this mettle and spirit.

The prophet was told that people of a strange speech would give him a better reception than these recalcitrant Jews, and this is sometimes our experience.

Church people are sometimes of all people the most unreasonable to deal with, the most hard-faced and stiff-necked.

Even heathen people are often more open to the gospel than those who are sermon-hardened in our Christian churches. We must not be discouraged at these things but keep on with our preaching and teaching "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."

It is our business to sow the seed and leave results with the soil and the shower and the sun, with the Holy Spirit and with God.

4. Words Received in the Heart

The prophet himself was in need of instruction and he received it. "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thy heart, and hear with thine ears."

He was first to get before he could give, to be taught himself before he could teach others.

In vain would he speak words that issued from no deeper source than his lips or his memory or his business as a prophet who might also be seeking profit. A merely professional prophet will soon show that he has no vital message and is only rendering a performance, even preaching for pay.

No one can really give out anything that he does not have in him as a part of his nature and spirit so that it will flow out of him as a stream out of a spring. Can one teach the art of painting who has no sense of form and color, whose own imagination is not a gallery hung with all manner of pictures and whose hands have not acquired the skill to copy these inner paintings on outer canvas? Or can one teach music who has no chords and melodies in his own soul and whose fingers cannot sweep the keys of the instrument with unconscious ease and skill? The bird sings because it cannot help it, and for the same reason the flower blooms and the sun shines.

We cannot preach or teach anything well until we have wrought it into our disposition and habit.

Not until we have forgotten the laborious processes by which we have learned to do things do we do them well. No one could walk who had to think and calculate how far and where to place his foot in order to take the next step and maintain his balance.

Just so is it in walking in the spirit and living the gospel. This life must pass beyond the letter into the spirit, beyond creeds and ceremonies into character and conduct, beyond profession into habitual practice.

And so the prophet had to receive in his own heart the words he was to speak so that they would well out of him as from an inner fountain. It is this living gospel of which the world and the church itself are short, its absence renders the pulpit impotent and may make the teacher sounding brass and a clanging cymbal.

"I cannot hear what you say because of what you are," said Emerson, and too many of us in the pulpit and in the teacher's chair are ineffective because of our lack of vital spiritual character, and our own worldliness may be thundering in the ears of our hearers so that they cannot hear what we say.

5. The Desire of Thine Eyes

The prophet was put to a sore trial and hard test. His beloved wife, the desire of his eyes, was taken from him in death, and yet he was forbidden to mourn and weep and wail because this would show a lack of faith and submission on the part of the prophet himself. He was not forbidden to experience sorrow for his heart-breaking loss, his heart might bleed, but he must maintain outward calm and go about his work in his ordinary attire and among his people in a composed spirit.

Thus he was to teach them faith and obedience by the unspoken sermon of his calm spirit, his suppressed tears were to be teachers of his enduring confidence in God.

We preach and teach, not only by what we say, but also and even more vitally by what we are and do, how we behave in all the conditions and trials of life. It does not become believers in him who is the resurrection and the life to give way to despairing weeping and outcries of woe that betray a lack of Christian faith and self-control.

Mourn we must when God takes away the desire of our eyes, but our very eyes should shine with a strange radiance that would seem to be born of confident hope and to be gleams from the gates of the eternal city rather than to be red with bitter tears of despair.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Read some of the descriptive poetical chapters of Ezekiel.
2. How does Ezekiel differ from Isaiah and Jeremiah?
3. How can we distinguish God's words from our own words?
4. How can we incorporate God's words in our very souls?
5. What are some proper and some improper manifestations of sorrow?

LESSON II—JULY 14

Ezekiel Teaches Personal Responsibility

Lesson: Ezekiel 18:1–32; 33:1–20.

Golden Text: Each one of us shall give account of himself to God. Romans 14:12.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 125.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Does God Take Note of My Life?

Topic for Young People and Adults: Individual Accountability to God.

Lesson Text: Ezekiel 33:7–16

7 So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

8 When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, and thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand.

9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, and he turn not from his way; he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.

10 And thou, son of man, say unto the house of Israel: Thus ye speak, saying, Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them; how then can we live?

11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

12 And thou, son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall he that is righteous be able to live thereby in the day that he sinneth.

13 When I say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his righteousness, and commit iniquity, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in his iniquity that he hath committed, therein shall he die.

14 Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

15 If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that which he had taken by robbery, walk in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

16 None of his sins that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Watchman.

2. His Responsibility.

3. Turn Ye.
4. Principles of Judgment.
5. He Shall Surely Live.

Ezekiel had been comforting the exiles by prophesying judgment upon hostile nations surrounding Judah, but he also turned his judgment against Jerusalem itself in the ominous words, "A sword, a sword, it is sharpened, and also furbished; it is sharpened to make a slaughter" (21:8). Word now came to him through an escaped citizen of Jerusalem that "the city is smitten."

It was in the midst of these dreadful days with the worst news arriving from Jerusalem that the prophet continued to uphold the exiles with both warnings and promises, intensifying their sense of personal responsibility.

1. A Watchman

"Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel." Watchtowers were built at the borders of a country and watchmen posted in them so that they could see the approach of an enemy by the dust raised by their march or the smoke of their camp fires and blow the trumpet and give the alarm. So was the prophet placed as a watchman to warn his people of approaching evil.

The watchman is still an important man in our complex life.

In the army the picket is stationed to keep watch in the direction of the enemy and give warning at any sign of attack, and on his sleepless vigilance may depend the safety of the whole army and the country.

Thousands of watchmen thus guard our safety and our very lives at many points.

The watchmen in charge of buildings by day and by night, the track walkers watching railway lines and bridges, the physician watching the patient and the nurse watching in the absence of the physician, these are instances of many who are appointed to keep watch over us, and on them we depend for our safety as we speed on the train through the night or lie on a bed of pain. All the way up from the bottom to the top of society, from the policeman on his beat before our door up to the President of the United States with the constitution and laws

of the state in his hands we are being cared for with vigilance that is never relaxed.

More closely and vitally still are parents and teachers appointed to watch over children and train and keep them in the right way.

We are born a bundle of wayward instincts and appetites and if they are not watched and trained they would run away with and ruin us.

In the spiritual world we are all appointed to watch one another and speak words of wisdom and warning.

Every one is his brother's keeper and should keep watch over his ways that he may render him any timely service in the way of helping him in the hour of danger or temptation. We are all woven into one complex web of society and no one liveth unto himself, and in some measure every one is responsible for others from his intimate friends out to the ends of the world.

This responsibility reaches its most pressing point in the relation of Christians to the unsaved.

We are saved to save others, and having received the grace of Christ we are to impart it unto others and thus spread it as leaven through the whole mass of the world.

To every one of us come the commission and bidding, "Son of man, I have set thee a watchman."

2. His Responsibility

The responsibility of the prophet was set forth in detail and in emphatic words. "When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, and thou dost not speak to warn the wicked of his way: that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand."

This seems a hard retribution to visit upon a watchman simply because he has failed to give warning.

But many a soldier has gone before the firing squad simply because he went to sleep at his post and thereby exposed the whole army to sudden attack and disastrous defeat. When a man's life or many men's lives have been committed to a watchman, it is not unjust that he should answer for his grave dereliction with a severe penalty, and

in extreme cases even with his life. When a general proves unfaithful to his heavy responsibility and thereby involves his army and his country in the gravest of national disasters he is shot forthwith. The blood of his soldiers and of his country is on his head and he can satisfy justice only with his own blood.

Any physician that would lose his patient by his own neglect and carelessness would be dealt with severely by his own profession and by the community. Every railroad wreck calls for searching investigation into the cause of it, and when it is found to be due to neglect of company rules and orders, severe punishment is meted out, not only by the company but by the civil law.

And do not parents bring just condemnation upon themselves when through their unfaithfulness their children go astray and become wayward and wicked? Are we not right in inquiring into the teaching in our schools and colleges and universities that we may know how those to whom have been committed the great responsibility of training our youth and keeping them out of false and dangerous lines of thinking are discharging their trust? If they are undermining religious faith and loosening the marriage bond and relaxing all our fundamental moral principles, shall we say that teaching is their expert business and we have nothing to do with it?

We shall do this at the cost of our own unfaithfulness as watchers over our youth.

These teachers are employed as experts, but they also are subject to watch and check and we have our responsibility for them.

So also are we responsible in a measure for the social and moral and spiritual condition of those around us.

If we do not exercise our responsibility as our neighbor's keeper and give him no word of warning and no invitation and welcome to come with us into the Christian life, verily his blood is on our souls.

The weakening of this sense of responsibility in the social world and especially in the religious life is one of the most serious symptoms and derelictions of our day.

Multitudes are going the way of unbelief and ruin because Christians are themselves indifferent and neglectful towards them and are not raising the cry of watchmen upon the walls.

A great revival of this social religious interest would kindle the church with holy fire and zeal so that every man would teach his neighbor and his brother, saying, Know the Lord.

3. Turn Ye

This message of social and individual responsibility seemed to put a hard burden on the exiles so that they might exclaim, Who is sufficient for these things? The prophet received a message that met this state of mind: "And thou, son of man, say unto the house of Israel: Thus ye speak, saying, Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them; how then can we live?"

The same thought at times perplexes us.

Are not the laws of life with their ever threatening penalties so hard to bear and so full of danger that it is hopeless for us to try to keep them? Why not give up in despair and let things take their inevitable course. Are we not living in a universe so unfriendly and unforgiving that there is no use in trying to do anything?

In answer to this state of mind comes a gracious word from Jehovah through the prophet: "As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

What a friendly and hopeful word is this to come to transgressors out of the heart of the universe from its Creator and Lord?

God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and instead of giving him pleasure their sin and suffering give him infinite grief and sorrow. For their sin was his Son slain from the foundation of the world. Jehovah hates nobody and never has pleasure in the suffering of any of his creatures except when suffering is a means to a good end, but God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life.

This truth shines out of the Old Testament and was declared to these exiles down in their bitter bondage in Babylon.

However a condition is always and necessarily attached to such declarations and promises of divine mercy and love: "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?"

God cannot be merciful to us in our evil ways, for such treatment of wickedness would undermine his throne and wreck his universe.

But he bids us do something that will reverse the operation of his laws towards us so that his judgment can turn to mercy. When the sun is burning us up with heat or we are freezing with cold, we can change our relation to the sun so as to shield us from or bathe us in its heat and thereby make it our friend and saviour. We can so turn in our relation to God and his laws of punishment that we shall not die from our sin but live in our righteous relation to him.

Turning is something we can do.

It is an appeal to our will power to exercise control and sovereignty over our own ways. We can choose and cherish such motives as will energize our wills so that we can turn. God never asks us to do anything that he does not enable us to do.

Every appeal to us in the Scriptures and every duty in life assumes this ability; we know we have it and can plead no excuse at this point; and so let us in response to this bidding turn from our evil ways and live.

4. Principles of Judgment

God's judgments are often complex, interwoven with many factors and conditions, but there are principles running through them that are comparatively simple and easy to understand and obey.

The prophet, still speaking in the name of Jehovah, unfolds some of these plain principles that appeal to our common sense of judgment.

"The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression." Is not that right and just? A man may be ever so good in his intentions and have a large degree of righteousness to his credit, but shall that deliver him from judgment when he turns to wickedness?

Righteousness is not like credit at the bank which we can draw upon to pay off newly acquired indebtedness. We already owe to God all the righteousness we have or ever can have, and never can we acquire

surplus credit which we can use to cover up or pay off some new dereliction and guilt.

In like manner the wicked man shall not fall by his sin in the day when he turns from his wickedness to righteousness. The old account shall not be held against him as a bar to his entrance upon a righteous life, but he can start with a clean balance sheet.

God has himself canceled the old debt and will start us with a new account when we enter the new life. This also is due to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who on his cross has canceled the old debt and started us as new creatures in his fellowship.

5. He Shall Surely Live

The prophet concludes this course of reasoning about old debts and transgressions with a great assurance: "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live." Here again shines out the grace of God in not holding the unpaid debt of our sins against us, but setting us free with a new account so that we shall surely live.

The universe, then, does not look upon us with a hard cold stare and unpitying eyes, but is friendly at its heart. And when we do "that which is lawful and right" in penitence and faith and obedience then the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ shall avail abundantly for our salvation and we "shall surely live."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give further instances of watchmen in our world.
2. To what extent are we responsible for social and religious conditions around us?
3. Are others equally responsible for us as we are for them?
4. How can we control our wills by which we control our lives?
5. Can we always see how divine judgments are executed?

LESSON III—JULY 21

Ezekiel's Vision of Hope

Lesson: Ezekiel 47:1–12.

Golden Text: Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end. Isaiah 9:7.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 100.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Will the Right Finally Win?

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Cure for the World's Ills.

Lesson Text: Ezekiel 47:1–9

1 And he brought me back unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward (for the forefront of the house was toward the east); and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, on the south of the altar.

2 Then he brought me out by the way of the gate northward, and led me round by the way without unto the outer gate, by the way of *the gate* that looketh toward the east; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

3 When the man went forth eastward with the line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the ankles.

4 Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through *the waters*, waters that were to the loins.

5 Afterward he measured a thousand; *and it was* a river that I could not pass through; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed through.

6 And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen *this?* Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the bank of the river.

7 Now when I had returned, behold, upon the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue forth toward the eastern region, and shall go down into the Arabah; and they shall go toward the sea; into the sea *shall the waters go* which were made to issue forth; and the waters shall be healed.

9 And it shall come to pass, that every living creature which swarmeth, in every place whither the rivers come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish; for these waters are come thither, and *the waters of the sea* shall be healed, and everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Source of the Stream.

2. A Deepening River.

3. Banks Lined with Trees.
4. Healing Waters.
5. Swamps That Refuse To Be Sweetened.
6. Manifold Fruitfulness.

Ezekiel was a poet-prophet, and truth was conveyed to him and expressed by him in picturesque forms.

These golden dreams are symbols of reality as are the visions of John in the Revelation.

The wonderful Temple Ezekiel saw and described was an idealized dwelling-place of God in the midst of his people restored to their own land. It is all conceived under the forms of geographical surveys and architectural specifications and realistic rubrics, but the figurative purpose and spiritual teaching are plain. Out of this Temple flowed water that is the same "river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God," and that reappears in the Revelation of John as "a pure river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

1. The Source of the Stream

The stream issued from the threshold of God eastward.

God is the source of all good.

"We cannot study a snowflake profoundly," says Tyndall, "without being led back step by step to the sun." Follow that snowflake farther back and it will lead us up to God, for the sun itself rolled from his hand. He is the original Fountain of the universe whence flow all its streams of stars and seas of constellations.

Water is a wonderfully suggestive symbol of life.

It is the white blood of the globe, coursing through clouds and springs and rivers, coming from the sea and going back to it as its mighty heart. Wherever its life-giving streams flow the earth grows green and blooms, and wherever they dry up it withers and parches into a desert.

Human life is directly dependent upon water, and without it thirst grows intolerable and ends in the agony of death. To wander far from streams and springs and become lost in a desert is an awful fate.

There is an inner thirst of the soul that is far deeper and more fatal than the physical thirst of the body.

Our finer spiritual life must be fed by purer water than that which flows through the sand and clay of earth. We shall never find the water of life until we drink from a river that has its source in the Rock of Ages. The mind must have truth, the heart must have affection, the sinner must have pardon and peace, and the soul must have God. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

No life, whether individual or national, can abide and grow green and fruitful that is not watered by this stream.

2. A Deepening River

The water issuing from the temple was a deepening river. At a distance of a thousand cubits it came up only to the ankles, an easily fordable stream; at two thousand cubits it came up to the knees; at three thousand, to the loins; and at four thousand, it was a broad, deep river that could not be forded.

Good things grow.

Many a majestic river that now waters a great continent was once a tiny stream. Trace the Mississippi or the Amazon back far enough and it becomes a mere rivulet. The printing press that is now a river that floods the world was once a little stream issuing from a German spring. The vast currents of electricity that are flashing around the globe were once a few curious sparks.

As the river of material civilization thus widens and deepens, so also does the river of moral, intellectual and spiritual life. Our immense modern knowledge of astronomy started with the apparent motions of the sun and stars that were largely misunderstood. Mathematics that now soar out of sight of ordinary minds began by putting one and one together. Human civilization began with men who lived in caves and hunted wild beasts. Our civil liberty was once a rivulet trickling through German forests, but now has flooded the northern continents and is flowing down upon the equator and beyond. Many a stream that is now shallow and that men think unimportant because they can step over it or wade through it will one day bear on its broad deep bosom the best civilization of the world.

It takes genius to look at the spring and see the distant majestic river.

The grandest fulfillment of this principle is the river of salvation.

The Jews were a comparatively insignificant ancient people, but their spiritual ideas are flooding the modern world.

The stream that issued from that rocky ledge of Bethlehem is now a mighty religious river that is reaching the end of the earth.

3. Banks Lined with Trees

This river was lined along both its banks with trees. Its waters did not flow a useless stream between sterile shores of sand, but it was distilled into sap and crystallized into leaf and fiber and unfolded into bud and blossom and ripened into fruit. Its banks grew green and velvety with verdure and bloomed into flowers.

Salvation is service.

It is not a destructive flood that goes rushing and roaring through the world uprooting all things into ruin; nor is it a stream that drifts idly by and leaves no mystic touch of life to mark its course; but it embroiders its naked banks with green and gold and all the beauty of holiness and adorns them with trees of righteousness.

The great river of salvation that has come down through the centuries is lined all along its way with these trees.

The freedom of the slave, the banishment of polygamy, the elevation of woman, the sacredness of the marriage tie, the brotherhood of men, the Christian home, the Christian school, the Christian hospital, the Christian state, these are the trees growing on the banks of this stream.

Stop this stream and these trees would wither. By these fruits shall it be judged. Wherever this river does not flow we find a comparative desert, a landscape without trees. Turn this stream upon a continent or island and there these trees will begin to grow.

The Christian himself is to be a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

4. Healing Waters

The waters of this river issued toward the east and went down into the desert and the Dead Sea.

That was a drear and dreadful desert.

Born of volcanic agony, the basin of the Dead Sea is a pit of desolation. Its steep rocky sides are cut deep with frightful scars through which its limestone bones grin like a hideous skeleton. Its shores are slimy with pitch. Its waters are saturated and bitter with salt and are poison and death to every living thing. The barren scene looks like a burnt-out world, a cosmic corpse such as we see in the moon.

Yet it was into this grave of death that these waters of salvation poured their crystal tide.

They did not seek pleasant fruitful fields or flower gardens where they might wander through green meadows or blooming beds, but they sought this dead and deadly desert.

And what a transformation was wrought at their touch?

The poisonous waters were healed and sweetened and swarmed with life, "every living creature which swarmeth, in every place where the rivers come, shall live."

This is a vivid picture of the mission and the mercy of the waters of salvation.

The Lord Jesus did not pick out a sinless world all abloom and aglow with pure and glorious life, a world shining as a bright unsullied star in the heavens, but he came to this sin-scarred and dead world and opened in its wilderness the fountain of his sacrificial life for its healing.

And his grace flowing through the world seeks out the lowest pits of corruption and death that it may purify and sweeten its sin-saturated waters and cause the wilderness and solitary place to be glad and blossom as the rose.

This is no mere figure of speech, but a reality that may be experienced in any lost life and seen at work in any wickedest place in the world.

The water of the gospel flowed down into the White Chapel district in London and Harold Begbie's "Twice-Born Men" are its triumphant victories. It flowed through the worst place in New York and rescued Jerry McAuley and through him healed the poisonous slums of that district.

The call of these healing waters is, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." And it is this same water that Jesus offers as he says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water."

5. Swamps That Refuse To Be Sweetened

There were points and depths in this desert pit, however, which would not be healed by the inflowing river of salvation. "But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed; they shall be given up to salt" (11). These were reeking swamps and poisonous pits so soaked in slime or incrusted with salt that the water could not cleanse them and they were given over to their incorrigible uncleanness.

This seems to be a shadow upon the fair picture of this river of salvation, the persistence of death in the midst of all this wealth and splendor of life.

Is it not so with the earth even as it is abundantly watered with the rivers and seas? What mean these deserts and poisonous swamps where no good thing can grow? Are they symbols of like conditions in the moral and spiritual world?

Is it not even so with this world as it is abundantly watered with the grace of God?

With the river of salvation flowing so fully and freely around us in a flood that has sufficient virtue to cleanse away all our sin and satisfy us abundantly, there are yet many that remain in the desert and down in the most poisonous pits of sin and will not let the healing water flow in. There are haunts and slums of wickedness that we fear will never be cleansed.

Some souls are so saturated and crystallized in sin that they give no promise of repentance and appear to be given up to eternal sin.

There are dark shadows upon God's world that even the brightness of his grace does not dispel; there are miry places and marshes outside the walls of the celestial city. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

Yet we never know when any one has reached such a final condition of fixity in sin and never are to cease to try to reach the most hopeless cases with the healing water of grace; and no one ever knows of himself that he has reached it and should never give up hope.

6. Manifold Fruitfulness

From these miry places the prophet's attention is again turned to the more pleasing vision of the fruitfulness of the river, which is again presented in a glowing picture. Its fruitshall be manifold in abundance and variety and richness. The trees shall stand clothed in fadeless beauty and their very leaves shall have medicinal virtues. All manner of fruit shall they bear, and every month shall have fresh fruit in its season.

The water of salvation shall produce no meager and monotonous life, but shall nourish a rich and glorious growth that shall ripen and blossom into all the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

"The waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary:" they have their fountain far up in the shining hills of God; and thence they flow down upon us in streams of celestial irrigation to cause us to bring forth whatsoever things are pure and whatsoever things are lovely and of good report.

This sanctuary has its earthly seat in the church of Christ which is a fountain to water our lives and make them grow green and fruitful in an otherwise desert world.

It is also our mission and work to make the sanctuary of the church a fountain of healing in our disordered world so that its streams will flow in currents of social justice and personal righteousness and cleanse the planet from all the marshes of sin and misery.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What makes water cleansing and life-giving?
2. How can we make the river of spiritual water broader and deeper?
3. What are some of the great unreclaimed swamps in the world?
4. Are there fewer deserts and marshes in our day than in Ezekiel's?
5. What can we do for those who seem to be beyond healing?

LESSON IV—JULY 28

The Story of Daniel

Lesson: Daniel 1:1–21; 2:13–19; 4:19; 7:28; 8:15–18; 9:20–23; 10:1–19; 12:9.

Golden Text: They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever. Daniel 12:3.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 46.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Preparing for a Life Work.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Character and Career of Daniel.

Lesson Text: Daniel 1:1–4, 19–20; 2:17–24

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.

2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God; and he carried them into the land of Shinar to the house of his god: and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring in *certain* of the children of Israel, even of the seed royal and of the nobles;

4 Youths in whom was no blemish, but well-favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and endued with knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability to stand in the king's palace; and that he should teach them the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

20 And in every matter of wisdom and understanding, concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his realm.

17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions:

18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his companions should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are his.

21 And he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings; he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that have understanding;

22 He revealeth the deep and secret things; he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.

23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast now made known unto me what we desired of thee; for thou hast made known unto us the king's matter.

24 Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and said thus unto him: Destroy not the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *College Temptations.*
2. *Daniel's Determination.*
3. *Daniel's Proposed Experiment.*
4. *Results of Abstinence.*
5. *Graduation Day.*
6. *Daniel's Thanksgiving.*

Daniel was a Hebrew captive in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar the king directed that certain Hebrew youths, "of the seed royal and of the nobles, youths in whom was no blemish," should be chosen to be trained in the Chaldean language and learning in order that eventually they might enter the royal service. Four Hebrew young men were thus selected and sent to the king's university. These boys were taken out of their homes and sent to college.

The lesson gives us an insight into the temptations and triumphs of ancient college life, and the story in its essential points fits closely into our modern life.

1. College Temptations

These boys suddenly found themselves thrust into new surroundings thickset with temptations.

The contrast between their modest Hebrew homes and the king's palace was marked.

At home they had been accustomed to plain food and humble living; and especially they had been trained up in an atmosphere of piety and worship. But in the royal university they were offered the richest viands, which were a daily portion of the king's dainties. Worse still, they were exposed to all the enticements of heathen worship and licentious idolatry.

The very meat and wine that was set before them had probably been devoted to a heathen god, and partaking of them was regarded as an act of worship. The critical question relating to these Hebrew youths was, whether their home training and religious character would stand the test of their changed circumstances and new temptations.

Would they maintain their plain habits and pious living, or would they give way to luxury and vice?

This is the test that meets many a boy as he leaves home for college or business.

A change of place is often attended with moral relaxation with older people and is especially dangerous with the young. At home they are surrounded with safeguards which are left behind when they go elsewhere.

Many a youth that was considered a good boy in his country or village home, when he went to college or to the city, went to ruin.

2. Daniel's Determination

Daniel determined that he would stand this test. He did not reason that he had been held down with hard restraints long enough and now he would assert his liberty and have a good time.

The splendor of the king's palace did not turn his head.

The tempting game and wine that were set before him did not seduce his appetite and unloose his self-control. On the contrary, he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat and wine. He saw the serpent in the intoxicating cup. He had seen fast young men fall.

He was unwilling to endanger his piety by conformity to paganism.

His home training asserted itself, all his good habits gathered around him for his support, and he formed a mighty resolution that he would keep himself unspotted. This young man had a moral backbone which in the hour of temptation stood erect and inflexible.

Daniel controlled his circumstances and did not allow his circumstances to control him. He was not one thing at home and another thing at college, but he maintained the same character everywhere.

3. Daniel's Proposed Experiment

Daniel took measures to thwart this temptation. We must study our temptations and use means to overcome them.

Good resolutions are not enough: there must be wise and strong action.

He requested of the steward that he might not defile himself. He put it in the form of a respectful request and not of a blustering demand. He used courtesy and tact and was gentlemanly in his refusal. There are wrong ways of doing right things and we should be respectful and courteous even in resisting temptation.

One does not need to be boorish in order to be brave.

Daniel's fine manly character had already won the admiration and favor of the steward. It is wonderful how these Hebrew boys win their way to favor in captivity. Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon, both captives in foreign countries, who rose to be prime ministers over the very empires that had enslaved them, are figures on the canvas of universal history of which any people might well be proud.

The polite request of Daniel was a hard thing for the steward, for it threatened to get him into trouble with the king. He was responsible for these boys, and if they were to show signs of being ill fed, off would go his head.

The good steward honestly stated the difficulty to Daniel, and Daniel's wit and tact found a happy way out. He did not ask the steward to run this risk, but he proposed an experiment that would test the matter without incurring any danger. Let the steward feed them ten days on plain vegetables and water and note the effect on their appearance.

The steward adopted the reasonable proposal and for ten days the four Hebrew boys lived on vegetables and water, while the other boys had highly spiced meats and wines. At the end of the ten days the Hebrew boys showed up the fairest and fattest, proving that they thrived best on plain food. The steward then took away the meat and wine and the victory was won.

Nothing succeeds like success. When a thing works, argument is ended.

Temperance invites this test at all points, and the gospel submits itself to the same trial and proof.

4. Further Results of Abstinence

There were still higher results from the abstinence of these young men. God gave them knowledge and skill in all wisdom and learning.

The meaning is not that they were given knowledge supernaturally, but that they acquired it through the divine favor; and their own health, habits and diligence were the means by which they enjoyed God's blessing.

Plain living gave them sound minds in sound bodies. Water imparts its crystal clearness to the brain, and a clear brain means quick learning and accurate scholarship. Wine muddles the brain and blurs the senses. When the wine is in the wit is out.

There are deep bonds of connection between good health and good scholarship.

If a student wishes to become skilled in all knowledge he must let wine alone.

These boys were not only abstemious, but they were also studious.

Their streams of good health were turned into the channels of regular habits of study and hard work. They were not at college simply to enjoy social pleasures and have a good time.

Athletics did not monopolize their time and absorb their energies.

Likely enough they were foremost, if not first, on the field of sports, but their business was their books. Knowledge costs systematic work and can be gained in no other way. Prayer is a means to good study, but it will not do the work of study itself.

Piety has no patented process of solving problems. Religious character is no certificate of high scholarship, though it may be a means thereto.

5. Graduation Day

At length the day of final examination and graduation came. In a room in the royal palace the graduating class was ushered in before the royal presence.

The king conducted the examination himself, so that its thoroughness and impartiality were assured. No "cramming" or "set-ups" would stand the test of his searching questions. Only honest solid work, extending through the whole three years, would endure the trial.

The result must have been a startling surprise for the assembled royalty. The four Hebrew captives stood at the head of the class.

They excelled in every study so that the king pronounced them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his realm. They were graduated "magna cum laude" and bore off the honors on commencement day.

There was no chance or favoritism in this outcome. It had its roots far back in character and conduct. Its success was assured that day that Daniel requested "that he might not defile himself." Such independent, manly, pious character has in it the promise and potency of great things and we expect to see it coming to the front.

Temperance and piety are powerful factors in winning life's race.

They are a splendid capital with which to go to college or to start in business. The wine cup diminishes and abstinence enhances a young man's chance in gaining a diploma in the university or in the larger university of the world. Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is.

There is far less luck in the affairs of life than many young men think, and far more depends upon sound worth and steady faithfulness.

Seest thou a young man diligent with his books and avoiding evil places, companionships and habits? He shall stand before examiners at the end of his college or university course and on commencement day shall receive a worthy reward.

The young people of our day, of whom some reports give us anxiety and alarm, will do well to take this leaf and lesson out of the record of these Hebrew college boys of an ancient time.

6. Daniel's Thanksgiving

The scene shifts to a later day in the life of Daniel when he had a strange experience. The Babylonians were much given to dreams and their interpretation and this played a large part in their life and in the court itself.

Every dream had its significance and there was a whole brood of professionals who were experts in their interpretations, variously

known as "wise men," "magicians," "enchanters," "determiners of fate," "sorcerers," and "Chaldeans."

On this occasion the king announced that he had had a dream, and forthwith the Chaldeans spake to the king, "O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream and we will show thee the interpretation." They thought their hour had come in which they would show their skill and astonish the king with some fortunate interpretation and thereby ingratiate themselves in his favor.

With great eagerness they waited to hear the dream. But the king announced that he had forgotten the dream and he now demanded that they both give the dream and its interpretation! The "wise men" were bold enough in their claims of wisdom, but they were not wise enough to do this. On the contrary they declared that there was not a wise man or any kind of man in the whole world that could do this impossible thing.

But the king persisted that they must tell the dream or "ye shall be cut in pieces." In vain did they protest and plead the impossibility of such a demand, but the king calmly insisted on their recalling his forgotten dream or go to the sword. They were caught in their own net and their situation would have been humorous, if it had not been so tragic and possibly the king did enjoy their predicament.

Orders were actually given for their execution, when at this point Daniel intervened, for he and his companions would be involved in the same sentence with the Chaldeans. He therefore proposed to his Hebrew companions that "they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his companions should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon."

The secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night and "then Daniel blessed the God of heaven."

Daniel's prayer of thanksgiving is now given and it is notable for its lofty majesty and joyous gratitude and trust.

He addresses God as the Sovereign who changeth times and seasons, removeth kings and setteth them up, giveth wisdom unto the wise and revealeth the deep and secret things, who knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. He praises him as the God of his fathers for having made known to him "the king's matter." He then sent word to the king not to destroy the wise men and asked to be brought before the king and he would show the interpretation.

Daniel thus used his knowledge to rescue these Chaldeans from their sentence of death.

He was a minister of mercy.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Are our college young people more lax in their morals than were those of a former generation?
2. What are some of the special temptations of college life to-day?
3. Has the teaching in our schools anything to do with laxity in morals?
4. Do dreams have any significance for us?

LESSON V—AUGUST 4

Belshazzar's Feast (Temperance Lesson)

Lesson: Daniel 5:1–31.

Golden Text: Be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot. Ephesians 5:18.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 1.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Drink Leads To.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Reveling and Ruin.

Lesson Text: Daniel 5:17–28

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; nevertheless I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

18 O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty:

19 And because of the greatness that he gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down.

20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:

21 And he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts', and his dwelling was with the wild asses; he was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; until he knew that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he setteth up over it whomsoever he will.

22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this,

23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine from them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.

24 Then was the part of the hand sent from before him, and this writing was inscribed.

25 And this is the writing, that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

26 This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end.

27 TEKEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

28 PERES; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Great Offer and a Splendid Answer.

2. A Proud Father.

3. The Son of His Father.
4. Strange Letters on the Wall.
5. Swift Judgment.

A great feast was being celebrated in Babylon at which king Belshazzar and a thousand of his lords drank wine and revelry was unconfined. Wine unbinds all restraints and the intoxicated king rushed madly into daring desecration. He ordered the sacred vessels, which his father King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, to be brought into the banquet hall that drunken lords and women might drink wine from them in praise of their heathen gods of wood and stone!

This insult to the true and living God did not long go unavenged.

A bodiless hand crept forth from the sleeve of night and wrote strange words on the plastered wall of the palace. Instantly the king was stricken with a panic and paralysis of fear that blanched his face and unloosed his joints. He cried for the astrologers to read the writing, promising rich rewards, but these reputed wise men could not decipher the unknown words.

Still the fiery letters gleamed and burned upon the wall and still the consternation among the terror-stricken revelers grew. At length the queen remembered Daniel and assured the king that he could read the writing.

Into the gorgeous banquet hall the Hebrew youth was ushered and stood the observed of all observers. Belshazzar pointed to the enigmatical words and told the captive that if he would interpret them he should be clothed in a purple robe, have a gold chain about his neck, and be third ruler in the kingdom.

1. A Great Offer and a Splendid Answer

Daniel heard the splendid offer, and answered in a still more splendid manner. Let the king keep his gifts and give his rewards to another: he would not sell his divine wisdom and perform his duty for such mercenary considerations; nevertheless he would read the writing to the king and make known the interpretation.

Here was a man that moved in a higher sphere than this empurpled king.

Belshazzar knew no motives but those that could be expressed in material terms. Purple and gold and kingdom were the most potent words in his vocabulary. He thought that of course these would dazzle the Hebrew captive and secure from him his utmost servility and service. But these words had no effect upon Daniel and rolled off him impotent, because they did not touch the deepest springs of his nature.

He lived under the power of the unseen spiritual world, and material things could not move him because they had no compelling affinity with him.

We live in a day when material forces are still strong, and purple and gold are among the most persuasive and powerful words of human speech. We need to shake ourselves loose from such motives and simply do our duty irrespective of such rewards.

2. A Proud Father

Daniel proceeded to address the king in a speech as bold and brave as it was eloquent.

He began with the king's father, for to understand a man's success or failure we must go back and see what instruction and opportunities he has had, what privilege he has improved or abused.

Daniel told the king that the most high God had given Nebuchadnezzar a great kingdom that overshadowed the world and clothed him with power to put men up or down at pleasure. Daniel had no narrow views of Jehovah as though he were a mere local God, but knew him as the God of the whole world.

We must beware of circumscribing God's presence and providence within Christian bounds and know that his hand disposes all the affairs of men.

This exaltation of Nebuchadnezzar, instead of humbling him into dependence and obedience to God, only caused him to lift up his heart and harden it in pride. He said to himself, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (4:30). With such swelling thoughts as these he walked his gardens and flattered his very soul at his success.

This is ever one of the dangers of worldly success, and such power is dearly purchased when it begets in us this spirit.

Nebuchadnezzar's pride went down before a terrible fall. He was deposed from his throne and appears to have been seized with a kind of insanity that led him to wander with the beasts and eat grass like an ox.

Have we not seen some such results from pride? Has it not brought many a high and haughty man down into the dust and caused him to eat bitter bread? Such a fall, however, was a mercy to Nebuchadnezzar and was the means of his rise.

3. The Son of His Father

This was Daniel's sermon, and now he gave it a pointed and powerful personal application. He was not afraid of his audience, even when that audience was one man who held life and death in his hand. "And thou his son" were the startling words with which he began the application.

No indirect allusions veiled his point, no honeyed phrases sweetened his speech, but he shot straight at the mark with his swiftest and sharpest words.

"And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this." With the warning of his father before him, the son had willfully trod directly in his steps. Is not this the darkest phase of our sin, that we have walked in the ways of evil though we knew its wrong and its ruin?

We cannot plead ignorance as an excuse for our waywardness, because we know better.

Daniel specified Belshazzar's evil deeds in a terrible catalogue. He had lifted himself up against the Lord of heaven, and desecrated the vessels of his house, and praised gods of silver and wood and stone, and had not glorified the God in whose hand was his breath.

These ancient sins have assumed modern forms and are still in the world and not far from every one of us.

Every evil thought or deed lifts itself up against God and desecrates the vessels of the body and mind and heart and offers him shame in-

stead of glory. Sin is in proportion to light and our light far exceeds that of Babylon and of Belshazzar on his throne with all his wise men at his service.

We live in the Light of the world, and as our light is so is our guilt when we sin against it.

Pride is as hateful to God and to men now as it was then, and a humble heart is ever the dear Lord's best interpreter and the surest means of finding his way and walking in his light.

4. Strange Letters on the Wall

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN, were the letters that the hand had written upon the wall. All foreign words look strange and mystifying and even terrifying to us, and these Aramaic words frightened the Babylonian king and lords.

But they were Daniel's native language and he read them off and gave their interpretation. Mene means numbered, and its interpretation was, "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end." Belshazzar thought himself at the height of his power and security and glory and would have derided the possibility of a fall. It is true that the Persians were already besieging the city, but this made no impression upon the infatuated king, blinded with pride and drunken with wine. Yet at the very height of his pride and presumption God had numbered his days and appointed their end.

We build ourselves up in power and think ourselves secure, when already our days are numbered and our end draws nigh.

This fact should rebuke our pride, turn us to God, and teach us to number our days and apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Tekel means weighed, and its interpretation was, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." Belshazzar's crown, that seemed to outweigh all the world, in the scales of God was but a bauble and a bubble that was about to burst and vanish into nothingness, and Belshazzar himself was of light weight. All things earthly are cast into these scales and have their true value determined.

In nothing are men's judgments further astray than in their estimate of relative weights and worths.

The difference between the savage and the civilized man comes out most strongly in their estimates of values, and the same judgment

measures the difference between bad men and good men. Beads and buttons are worth more in central Africa than bank bills and books, and in many Christian homes gold is rated higher than grace. Many a thing that in the estimate of man bulks large and weighs heavy, in the scales of God is found to be a bubble as light as air.

Most men's estimate of themselves must undergo some reduction when tried in the divine scales, and many a man that is supposed to be of massive substance and worth when put to this test will be found wanting.

Peres, the singular of upharsin, means divided, and its interpretation was, "Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." A kingdom built on mere power and pride could not last: it drew against itself constantly increasing opposition that finally overcame it. The path of the centuries is strewn thick with the spoils of empires that were divided amongst their enemies.

Such was the doom written against the Babylonian king, and the same judgments still come forth from the hand of God and may be written against us. The world recently witnessed the downfall of four great empires and emperors whose pride caused them to be a menace to the world and their domineering haughtiness sent them crashing into tremendous ruin.

We need in our satisfaction if not exaltation over such judgment to beware that we as a nation do not develop the same spirit of domination among the nations, lest the same judgment overtake us.

It is difficult to have power without being tempted and yielding to the temptation to use it.

Military men feel that they should be about their business and use their swords and guns, men of wealth feel disposed to use it to secure their own financial and social ends and personal aggrandizement, and the least of us are not immune from the same temptation, for every one has some means and opportunity to exercise his pride.

5. Swift Judgment

"In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain." So swiftly did execution follow the sentence. The Persian army gained an entrance into the city, swept through its streets and palaces in slaughter, and Belshazzar and his nobles were slain drunk.

May not the whole disaster be traced to the debauchery of the wine cup?

Intoxication bred weakness and led to the sacrilege that paved the way for the Persian retribution and triumph.

The wine cup has caused the downfall of many a king and kingdom, prince and noble, lord of wealth and man of genius, as well as countless men in the common ranks of life. No station is too high to be exempt from its fatal fascination and terrible downfall, and no one is so low that it cannot sink him to a still lower depth.

It has had its way so long and has made such a wide and deep exhibition of its power to assassinate the brain and corrupt the heart and ruin homes and threaten the foundation and fabric of the social order that our country has risen against it and put it under absolute prohibition and written this prohibition in its fundamental constitution. It took a hundred years of education and agitation to do this deed, and not soon or easily shall we let this star be extinguished or dimmed. We have gained this outpost of victory, but still must we make the victory good and complete by closing in on every resort and device by which the law may be evaded and uproot the last remnant and relic of this evil. It is not to the point to tell us that the law is being evaded and therefore should be annulled, for the same thing can be said against every law.

The thing to do is to move forward into more rigid enforcement of the law and not backward into its annulment with the return of the saloon and all the old evils. For this is just what the repeal of the law against intoxicating drink will do: it will bring back the saloon with all its outrageous sins against society.

This continued education against intoxicating drink and for temperance calls for patience and perseverance and bravery, but it can be done, and may God help us to do it.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. When is a father to blame for his son's pride?
2. Are we not all the sons of our fathers?
3. Ought we ever to take money for performing a duty?
4. What writings of judgment against us may we see?
5. What may we do to enforce better the prohibition law?

LESSON VI—AUGUST 11

Daniel Among the Lions

Lesson: Daniel 6:1–28.

Golden Text: The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Psalm 34:7.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 91:9–16.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Meaning of True Courage.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Courage of Faith.

Lesson Text: Daniel 6:10–11, 16–23

10 And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem); and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

11 Then these men assembled together, and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God.

16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. *Now* the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep fled from him.

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

20 And when he came near unto the den to Daniel, he cried with a lamentable voice; the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.

22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

23 Then was the king exceeding glad, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he had trusted in his God.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Unyielding Devotion to Prayer.

2. Hypocritical Loyalty to Law.

3. A Perplexed King.

4. Daniel in the Den.

5. A Strange Deliverance.

Hebrew boys in captivity had a way of rising to positions of responsibility and power, and presently we find Daniel, like Joseph in Egypt, a ruler in the very country where he was a captive.

Babylon was divided into one hundred and twenty provinces, each governed by a satrap; over the satraps were three presidents, and Daniel was one of these three.

By his superior ability and wisdom he rose to distinction and became conspicuous above all other officials.

This drew upon him their envy and hatred, and they were soon busy plotting his ruin. They first spied upon his official conduct, but could find nothing there to allege against him. Then they said they never could catch him unless they would ensnare him in his religion.

They knew that "the law of his God" was his strong point, and that if they could hit him there they would hit him hard.

A cunning trap was now devised and set for him. The presidents and satraps counseled Darius to issue an interdict that if any one should ask a petition of any god or man save the king for thirty days, he should be cast into the den of lions.

Darius signed the decree and these conspirators felt sure that they had this hated Jew caught.

1. Unyielding Devotion in Prayer

When Daniel knew that the writing was signed he went into his house and prayed at his open window with his face towards Jerusalem three times a day, as he did aforetime.

Did not this seem like unnecessary publicity and boldness in his devotions?

Might he not have continued in prayer secretly, and thus have avoided trouble? In view of the great issues at stake, his position as president and his protection to his own people, might he not have been justified in omitting his prayers altogether for thirty days? Only thirty days, he could surely drop his public and even his private piety thirty days in order to maintain his position.

Not so thought Daniel. Prayer was the tie that bound him to God, the open channel through which he derived strength from him.

Cut this tie and he would be severed from God; choke up this channel, and his strength would wither. The inflexible principle of his life was that he ought to obey God rather than men, and the path of obedience, though it led to a den of lions, was the path from which no threats could frighten him.

As for secret devotions, Daniel was no coward.

He had always prayed at his open window with his face towards Jerusalem, not in ostentation, but after the manner of the Jews, and he would not yield this point when it involved the whole principle. He never had been ashamed of his religion from the days of his youth when he refused to defile himself with the king's meat, and he would not now in the days of his greatness turn traitor and stultify himself. So, promptly at the regular hour, he appeared at his window and prayed and gave thanks before his God.

The habit of a lifetime now sustained him and held him true to the God of his fathers. We should have a habit of prayer that nothing can break.

The old decree of the Babylonian king assumes modern forms. Business may bid us omit our regular worship and bow at the shrine of wealth. Fashion and pleasure may be so imperious in their demands as to leave no time or disposition for our devotions. Worldliness is skeptical of prayer and asks what good it is anyway: why not omit it altogether?

Against all these decrees of our modern world we should hold fast to our faith and be systematic and strenuous in prayer before God.

2. Hypocritical Loyalty to Law

The conspirators were watching Daniel and soon had abundant evidence that he was breaking the decree. Then they came to the king, recited the facts concerning the signing of the interdict, and secured his admission that "the thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not."

A surprise was then sprung on the king. They answered, "That Daniel, who is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the interdict that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day."

Here was a masterly piece of machination against Daniel.

First, these enemies had the law on him. Having caught him with their crafty decree, they now made a great show of loyalty to the law, they came out strongly on the side of the constitution.

It was not the last time that legal decrees, which in general are intended to effect good ends, were turned to cunning devices for working evil.

Law is one of the great safeguards of justice and liberty, but it often has been perverted to bad ends. Was not our national constitution used as the chief bulwark of slavery? and has not the plea of "unconstitutional" been planted in the way of many a reform?

Next, these conspirators tried to raise prejudice against their victim by calling him "that Daniel, who is of the captivity of the children of Judah."

They poisoned their charge with the bitterest race enmity the world has ever known.

To this day in some countries to call a man a "Jew" is to brand him with one of the deepest marks of prejudice and hatred; and since the great war there has been a widespread recrudescence of anti-Semitism which has become an organized propaganda.

This is an unjust and cruel prejudice which Christians should disown and oppose.

Calling names is everywhere a favorite means of affixing a stigma upon an opponent, and it has been known to do service even on behalf of Christian faith.

Lastly, they alleged that the Jew regarded not the king but persisted in making his petition three times a day. Here Daniel's heroism in duty was used to secure his undoing.

It is one of the tragedies of the path of duty that it may lead to a lions' den.

3. A Perplexed King

This news came to the king as an unexpected and most painful disclosure. He knew nothing of the crafty device that was concealed in the decree and had signed it innocently of any wrong thought towards Daniel. He had discovered the worth of the young Hebrew as an able

and incorruptible official, and did not want to lose such a valuable man, especially through the conspiracy of his rivals to crush him.

The king was sorely distressed at the situation and set his wits to work to deliver his faithful minister. All day long he labored at the problem. The corrupt officials, however, took care that he should reach no solution by reminding him that no decree which the king had established could be changed. It does not appear why he might not have cut the hard knot with his sword and boldly have told these men that, if they interfered with Daniel, he would throw them to the lions.

But the unchangeableness of his own decree seems to have paralyzed his will and borne him helpless on its current. The king did the mischief when he signed the blasphemous decree, and now he was imprisoned in his own evil action.

This is the fateful nature of all wrongdoing.

Many a man has built his own prison house and locked himself within its iron gates by his repeated evil thoughts and acts. One can crystallize his soul in sin and this may harden into eternal sin.

The way to avoid this sinister fate is to keep the heart pure and train all the habits of thought and action into right character and conduct, and then, instead of building one's own prison house of sin, he will build for his soul a beautiful palace of truth and virtue.

4. Daniel in the Den

So the king issued the order that the decree should be executed. Daniel was carried to the lions' den. The king, however, had a parting word with him that showed the king's faith and that must have cheered Daniel. "Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee."

This was a wonderful tribute to the religious character and conduct of Daniel.

He had so lived that the heathen king believed that the God of such a man would surely deliver him. Later the king issued a decree calling upon all his subjects to pay reverence to "the God of Daniel."

God came to be known through Daniel, as a man may come to be known through his famous son.

This is letting our light so shine before men that they will see our good works and glorify, not us, but our Father in heaven.

Daniel was now dropped into the den, and its mouth was closed with a stone and sealed with the king's signet. The enemies of Daniel were delighted beyond measure at the success of their devilish device. They chuckled and roared as they thought of how easily they had deceived the king and caught the Jew.

Wine flowed freely, and there was many a joke and ribald song at the expense of their victim.

The king passed a very different night. Sleep fled from him, no instruments of music and dancing girls were brought in to entertain him, but he fasted all night long in an agony of suspense.

And Daniel—how did Daniel spend the night? Daniel was alone with the lions—and with God.

There are still lions' dens in the world into which many a good man is dropped.

The lions of temptation and trial, of slander and persecution, of disaster and death, are ravenous against the righteous, and many an innocent and brave man is flung by his enemies into their jaws.

Few are the prophets of the race that have escaped this den.

Socrates and Isaiah and Paul met this fate, and many a modern leader of liberty and progress has been dropped into this pit. One greater than all human prophets went the same way, and his cross stands as the supreme climax of human fate and divine sacrifice.

Let us not think it strange if in some degree the same trial should overtake us and we should hear the growl of lions.

The same devil still goes about as a roaring lion, and there are plenty of men who are his minions to do his work. Strong drink is a terrible lions' den into which have been cast the very flower of our youth and the mouth of this pit still yawns to receive all who fall or are thrown into it.

It is characteristic of a lions' den that all the tracks go into it and few come out, and few are they that go into the devil's den that escape with their character and liberty and life.

5. A Strange Deliverance

How did this case come out? With the earliest gray of the morning the king hastened to the den and called with a lamentable voice to

Daniel to know if his God had been able to deliver him. It must have been an intense moment of mingled fear and hope with the king as he listened for a reply.

The voice of Daniel came back clear and calm, telling the king that God had found him innocent and had sent his angels to shut the lions' mouths so that they had done him no hurt.

The king was filled with great joy, had Daniel taken up out of the den, and ordered the conspirators to be thrown in, who were torn to pieces before ever they reached the bottom of the pit. So Daniel was strangely delivered from the den that was intended to destroy him and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in and was faithful to his God.

Some times justice gets done in this world, and in every den of lions God is present keeping watch above his own.

Even had Daniel been torn to pieces, yet would he have been in God's hands and would have received a heavenly deliverance. Faith is not always answered and rewarded with an earthly release, the fiery trial may burn the body to ashes, but the spirit passes through the flames scatheless and is ever commended and committed to the Father of spirits.

It is our safety and blessing to follow the voice of conscience and duty and not be afraid of lions.

They cannot touch a hair of our heads if we are in the way of righteousness and trust in God.

Lions may really be ministers of his to do his bidding and we shall come out of their den to praise God and serve him in all his ways.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. In what ways is prayer a power in life?
2. How may we show true loyalty to law?
3. Should we keep a wrong promise?
4. Name some other lions' dens in the world.
5. Who was it that "stopped the mouths of lions"?

LESSON VII—AUGUST 18

The Return from Captivity

Lesson: Jeremiah 29:10–14; Ezra 1:1–11; Psalm 126:1–6.

Golden Text: Jehovah hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Psalm 126:13.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 124.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Making a Fresh Start.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Historic Significance of the Return.

Lesson Text: Ezra 1:1–6; Psalm 126:1–6

1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying,

2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

3 Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem.

4 And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

5 Then rose up the heads of fathers' *houses* of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem.

6 And all they that were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.

1 When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion,
We were like unto them that dream.
2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing:
Then said they among the nations,
Jehovah hath done great things for them.
3 Jehovah hath done great things for us,
Whereof we are glad.
4 Turn again our captivity, O Jehovah,
As the streams in the South.
5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing seed for sowing,
Shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves *with him.*

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A New Era Opens.

2. A Passionate Dream.

3. Volunteers Called For.
4. Sifting Out the Emigrants.
5. Sacred Vessels Returned.
6. A Song of Praise.

We have reached another turning-point in the history of the Jewish people.

Captivity has done its work.

No chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.

This was the effect of the exile on the Jews. It forever shattered the power of idolatry over them by showing them its awful degradation; taught them the spirituality of religion, made them appreciate their own land and religious institutions, especially the Sabbath and the Scriptures; welded together the remnants of the twelve tribes like iron in a furnace; brought them into contact with the great world and thus lifted them out of their provincialism and widened their theological views and their national sympathies; and sifted the nation and sent back the purest seed to restock the land.

Out of the Euphratean valley of dry bones rose a new nation that was politically dependent and weak, but was spiritually purer and stronger.

Loss often leads to larger gain.

The seed falls into the ground and perishes, but it springs up, blossoming and bearing fruit many fold. The chemist extracts from scum and dross the most beautiful dyes and the most exquisite perfumes. Out of the lowest dregs of humanity God can fashion saints. Trial and tears can be transmuted into strength and serenity, ashes into beauty, and a spirit of heaviness into a garment of praise.

Out of the pit of Babylon came forth a purified and disciplined people who were thereby prepared for their great mission in the world.

1. A New Era Opens

The new era opens with a heathen king in the foreground as a director of events. Cyrus, the Persian, having made himself conqueror

of Persia, marched upon Babylon and soon had it in his grasp. In this old world, empire crashes upon empire, and one conqueror goeth and another conqueror cometh.

Cyrus was the visible king, but back of him was the King invisible, immortal, eternal, who was the real power behind the throne.

Seventy years before, Jeremiah (29:10) had predicted the overthrow of Babylon and the release and return of the exiled people. The captives had worn out all the days of their appointed exile in weary waiting and watching for the signs of fulfillment. Probably they themselves had a hand in the overthrow of cruel and hateful Babylon and the triumph of Cyrus, from whom they might have some hope. Thus Cyrus was the instrument of fulfilling divine prophecy and purpose, though he knew it not and was only following his own plans.

God's eternal purpose shoots through all human plans and passions and draws all agents unconsciously into his service.

The Lord started this movement by stirring up the spirit of Cyrus to issue a proclamation.

When God sets out to do something he immediately gets a man to do it.

Without him we can do nothing, and without us he will do nothing. Cyrus was a heathen man, but the Lord stirred up his spirit, inspired him for the service.

Inspiration is broader than prophets and apostles and broods over the whole world. God is not limited in his access to human minds and hearts and can draw any soul into his service.

2. A Passionate Dream

Cyrus opened his proclamation by declaring that he had been charged by Jehovah the God of heaven to build him a house in Jerusalem. Such language did not indicate any special faith in Jehovah on the part of Cyrus, for this was in accordance with the custom of the age, and he used the same kind of speech with reference to the national god of conquered Babylon.

Nevertheless, he spoke truer than he knew, for he was, indeed, commissioned of Jehovah to do this very thing.

The chief objective in view in this return to Jerusalem was to " build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel." It was a religious movement, a grand national revival.

The Jews had seen the utter folly and filthiness of idolatry and wanted to return to their own pure spiritual worship.

The restored land was to be publicly consecrated to the Jehovah their God, and henceforth they would be loyal to him. Their return was to culminate in the rebuilt temple, which was the visible symbol and chief glory of their worship. Passionately they longed to see those walls rise again on Mount Zion, and Cyrus struck the most responsive chord in their hearts and awoke all the ancestral music of their history when he called upon them to go up to their beloved city and build the house of Jehovah.

Religious enthusiasm is the most powerful motive that can inspire and sway men.

It led the Jews out of Egypt through the terrible wilderness into the promised land, and now it was about to lead them out of the Babylonian prison and carry them across a thousand miles of desert sand back into that same country.

A passionate desire for religious freedom led our Puritan and Pilgrim forefathers to cross the stormy Atlantic and settle on the rocky fringe of a new continent, and the religious passion and motive has been a dominating principle and urge in our national history.

We should honor their heroism and be true to the faith of our fathers.

3. Volunteers Called For

The proclamation called for volunteers for this return. It was not a forced repatriation of these exiles, but a voluntary exodus. This was a wise principle and process, as it would sift out the most restless and rebellious, who were therefore the most dangerous in Babylon, as well as the ablest and most enterprising who would therefore be most efficient in the new colony.

The kingdom of God is everywhere built on this voluntary principle and is thoroughly democratic in spirit.

"Whosoever will" is its invitation. Some things we must do because God makes us, but other things we may do because they are subject to our choice and action. We may stay in a state of rebellion against and exile from God, our bones may bleach in the valley of sin, if we will; but we also have the sovereign power of responding to his call and returning to him.

God's service is not slavery but fellowship.

All the exiled Jews, however, did not choose to return. Various ties restrained them. Some were too old and frail to undertake such a journey. Some lacked the adventurous spirit of emigrants. Others were rooted in that sandy soil through business and marriage and the graves of their dead. A considerable number thus chose to remain, while their more resolute brethren turned their faces towards the west.

All can enter the kingdom of God, but there are particular forms of service all cannot enter.

The missionary field at home and especially abroad calls for a picked class of pioneers. While a few brave spirits set out for the ends of the earth to build the house of the Lord in every land, the great mass of Christians must remain in their home place.

These Jews that remained, however, were to help those that went. They were to supply the emigrants with silver and gold, with goods and beasts, and with freewill offerings for the temple. This movement thus had the support of the whole people, those that remained at home acting as a base of supplies for those that went.

We cannot all go into the mission field, but we can help support those that go. Our country is an immense base of supplies with which we should equip and carry on the great missionary enterprise of building the house of God in every land.

4. Sifting Out the Emigrants

The hour for action had now arrived. The king's proclamation must have caused intense excitement among the captive Jews and been the subject of their talk and plans day and night. In every home the question was, Who can go and who must stay?

A process of selection thus sifted out the emigrants.

These were of different classes. First among them are named the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin. The fathers must be in the forefront of any movement that is going to succeed.

Young men are needed for enterprise and energy, but these must be directed by the wisdom of the fathers, or they will miss the mark.

Next were the priests and Levites, men set apart and anointed to minister in the name of God. Man must reach up and clasp hands with God, if he would found a nation, or build a house, or wisely order his life.

No nation or society or home is complete that does not have in it the recognition and worship of God.

Lastly are mentioned "all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem." This is a general class, but it includes more especially the young and enthusiastic element.

We must always make room for youth and let their effervescing spirit have full vent in the enterprises of God.

The total number of emigrants was about fifty thousand (2:64–65), a goodly army that started on this long march of upwards of a thousand miles.

These all "rose up" to return.

With all the incentives human and divine that moved them to take this hazardous course, they had themselves to rise up and set their own feet in the sand of the desert day after day. However long grew the distance and weary their spirits, they had to carry on until their feet stood within the gates of their beloved city.

We must combine with any divine grace we receive our own grit, or we shall never return to the Lord and reach any worthy objective either in this world or in the heavenly country.

5. Sacred Vessels Returned

The returning exiles were liberally supplied with means. Their remaining friends and even their heathen neighbors furnished them with money and outfits for their journey and offerings for the temple.

Cyrus himself executed a fine stroke of political policy by ordering the treasurer to restore to the returning Jews the sacred vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple when he captured and sacked Jerusalem. There was an astonishing number of these, more than five thousand. These vessels that had been filched away from the temple and that Belshazzar had desecrated at the feast on the fatal night of his fall had thus been providentially preserved for the new temple. Possibly Cyrus was glad to get rid of them with their fateful history and ominous associations. All these vessels did Zerubbabel bring with the captives to Jerusalem.

In returning to God we are not to go empty handed, but are to take with us all our treasures and use them in his service.

Every vessel that has been desecrated by sinful use, every possession and power that we have acquired, should henceforth serve and glorify him. God must have not only our penitence and faith, but also our means. Silver and gold are necessary in building the house and kingdom of God as well as men.

No one is thoroughly converted until the grace of God strikes clear through him and penetrates into his pocketbook.

Not only must ministers and missions be supported with money, but it is fitting that the house of God be furnished with precious things, vessels and adornments that will render our worship more efficient and beautiful.

So should we return to our God now, and at last we shall be among the ransomed of the Lord that shall return to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.

6. A Song of Praise

The Jews always broke into song in celebration of joyous events. The One Hundred and Twenty-sixth Psalm is obviously an expression of their joy over their return to Zion. They were like those in a dream, the news being too good to be true, and instinctively their hearts gushed into song that filled their mouth with laughter and their tongue with singing. So great was their joy that even their heathen neighbors were impressed by it and joined in their testimony that Jehovah had done great things for the released captives.

Yet they turned their praise into a prayer that their captivity might yet be more fully redeemed and the seed they had been sowing in tears might be reaped in joy.

The return was a long process, and sometimes they were on the crest of the joyous tide and at other times they were still in its trough. There are ups and downs in the Christian life and we must expect these vicissitudes and praise God through them all.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of Babylon and its place in this ancient history.
2. Is God still using pagans in his service?
3. May they enter the kingdom of God through such obedience?
4. What Christian enterprises are we called upon to enter?
5. What should we take with us into this service?

LESSON VIII—AUGUST 25

Rebuilding the Temple

Lesson: Ezra 3:1–6:22; Psalm 84:1–12.

Golden Text: I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah. Psalm 122:1.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 122.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Building God's House.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Builders of God's House.

Lesson Text: Ezra 3:10–13; 6:14–16; Psalm 84:1–4

10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Jehovah, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise Jehovah, after the order of David king of Israel.

11 And they sang one to another in praising and giving thanks unto Jehovah, *saying*, For he is good, and his loving-kindness *endureth* for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised Jehovah, because the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid.

12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' *houses*, the old men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:

13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

14 And the elders of the Jews builded and prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

16 And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.

1 How amiable are thy tabernacles,
O Jehovah of hosts!
2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth
for the courts of Jehovah;
My heart and my flesh cry out unto
the living God.
3 Yea, the sparrow hath found her a
house,
And the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
Even thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts,
My King, and my God.
4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy
house:
They will be still praising thee.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The First Thing Put First.

2. Songs and Shouts of Joy.

3. Pessimism and Optimism.
4. Opposition to the Work.
5. The Temple Finished.
6. The Dedication.

The fifty thousand returning exiles found Jerusalem a heap of ruins that had been left by Nebuchadnezzar. They obtained temporary homes in the neighboring towns and then began the work of rebuilding the city.

1. The First Thing Put First

The first building they began was the temple of Jehovah; and the first part of the temple erected was the altar, and the daily offering of sacrifices according to the law of Moses was immediately reëstablished. Then the foundation of the main structure was laid.

Thus all the while that the temple was rising the smoke of sacrifice ascended and worship was combined with work.

It might have been argued that these returned exiles should have rebuilt their homes before they erected the altar and began the temple. They did secure temporary lodgings (2:70), but they were right in beginning with the altar. That was the vital center of their city whence all their inspiration and activities were to radiate.

It was their worship that inspired their work, and therefore they did well to put the first thing first.

The altar of prayer is the first thing that we should erect everywhere.

God should have the first place in our plans, and worship should always precede and accompany work.

Our forefathers, in founding this country, among their first buildings in each settlement erected a church and started public worship. We have built all our civilization around this altar, and it is the foundation and core of our national life to-day.

In founding a home, let the altar of prayer be put in its center first.

The home can be built up in purity and peace and power only as it is pervaded by worship. Every life should be built on this foundation stone, and all our plans should be inspired by prayer.

No small part of the wisdom of life is in knowing the relative time and place and value of things and what things to put first and what things to put in a secondary place.

Let us seek first the kingdom of God and all needful things shall be added unto us.

2. Songs and Shouts of Joy

The laying of the foundation of the temple was accompanied with songs and shouts of joy. The priests were arrayed in their gorgeous official robes, and the instruments of music, long silent as they hung on the willows down in Babylon (Ps. 137:2), were brought forth. David had organized the great temple choir and the musical service was now restored.

The priests and Levites sang together by course responsively, the soloists singing a strain which was then answered with a great burst of song by the chorus accompanied with cymbals and all the instruments of music. All the people also shouted with a great shout. And thus they all praised and gave thanks unto God Jehovah, "For he is good, for his loving-kindness endureth forever toward Israel."

Though they were returned captives in the midst of the ruins of their former city, yet they saw the goodness of their God in their situation and their hearts swelled and broke into song.

The Jews were a singing people through all their varied history, and this was one fountain of their faith and hope ever gushing up through all adverse circumstances as springs in the desert.

Worship has always instinctively wedded itself to the wings of song.

Atheism is not singable, but the angels at the birth of Jesus poured floods of melody from the choir gallery of the skies, and the gospel has ever since been singing its way through the world.

We ought to join in the singing in the church service, and if we cannot sing we can at least shout.

The people are to be pitied who have so dried up the fountain of their emotions and sealed their lips with the conventional silence of fashion that they are afraid to open their mouths in singing in the church service, or think they cannot do so. It is all very well to have

a trained choir to lead the singing, but if they are to do our singing, better not have it at all. We cannot praise God by proxy. "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee."

3. Pessimism and Optimism

The joy of the occasion, however, was mingled with sadness. Many of the old men, priests and Levites and heads of houses, who had seen the glory of the former temple that had been reared and enriched by the lavish hand of Solomon, when they saw the rough foundations laid in the midst of the ruins of the former city wept and sobbed like children. They saw the golden age in the past and thought the former times were better than their own degenerate days.

Old men are apt to look backward and have sad thoughts over the passing of the former days. The new ways look strange to them and they fear they are not as good as the old.

But many "shouted aloud for joy, . . . and the noise was heard afar off." Doubtless these were the younger men who faced forward rather than backward and saw the dawn of the coming glories rather than the fading of past splendors.

Youth is fresh in faith and hope and sees in present beginnings a foundation on which to build the fair structure of the future.

The same foundation called forth such mingled sobbing and shouting that it was difficult to distinguish the one from the other until the younger people outshouted the older people and sent their hosannas rolling far out over the hills.

The same state of society or condition of the church may be viewed by some as degeneracy and coming ruin, and by others as indicating progress and coming triumph.

Everything depends on the point of view, the backward or the forward look and the temperament of the observer.

Looking on the same world, some are pessimists and others are optimists, and such differences are rooted deep in faith and character and conduct and in the whole personality. We should cultivate an optimistic faith and temper and in the present foundations see the coming temple, in the buds of spring spy the bloom of the coming summer.

God did not live in the past only, but is alive to-day and forevermore: and whatever the achievements and glories of the past, he ever has some better thing in store for us.

"Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this" (Eccle. 7:10).

The world is growing better.

4. Opposition to the Work

A serious obstruction now arose in building the walls of the city.

But was there ever a good work that some one did not arise to oppose it? The objector is ever with us.

The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity were rebuilding the temple (ch. 4). These adversaries were the mixed race of Samaritans, composed of the remnants and dregs of the Israelites that were left behind in the land and were amalgamated and debased with Assyrian colonists that were forcibly settled among them. Their religion was a corresponding mixture of the true worship and idolatry (II Kings 17:33).

These corrupt worshipers came up to Jerusalem and with smooth speech made a plausible proposal: "Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as ye do" (4:2).

Zerubbabel and his chiefs rejected the proposal on the ground that, as he said to them, "Ye have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God."

At first sight this may look like narrow sectarian exclusiveness, but it was only rejecting a false alliance that would have endangered if not wrecked their whole enterprise.

These Samaritans were still in the mire of idolatry, from which horrible pit the Jews had just been rescued. The purified patriots knew that their national and spiritual life depended upon their keeping themselves unspotted from that filth. Therefore they would not associate with idolators even in building the temple of their God. They had just come out from that degradation and would remain separate and not touch the unclean thing. The speech of these ad-

versaries was smooth and courteous, but so was the speech of the great Adversary that tempted Jesus.

We must look behind the speech to the speaker, and often what the speaker is spoils the speech.

When insincere or evil persons come to us saying, "Let us build with you," we should beware of their proposals and refuse to join in building a house with them.

These adversaries did not let up in their opposition when their proposal was rejected, but they showed their true attitude towards the new building by weakening the hands of the people and troubling the builders. They hired lawyers against them at court and stopped the work for fifteen years. Yet under the next Persian king these obstructions were overcome, the work was renewed, and the temple finally finished.

They "weakened the hands of the people:" how easy it is to do this! A word, a sinister look, a suspicious question, an anonymous letter, and the evil work is done.

It takes genius to paint a picture, but any boor can ruin it. It takes no grace of mind or cunning of hand to weaken a good work. We can easily annoy and vex and obstruct others if we will.

5. The Temple Finished

The work was resumed and the elders were greatly encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. These men were helpers rather than hinderers, they encouraged and inspired the workers by their prophesying or preaching, declaring unto them the will of God.

The man of ideas is needed in building as well as the man with hands; mind is as necessary as muscle, brain not less than brawn.

Ideas draw up plans and specifications and give direction and energy and enthusiasm to the work. The prophet inspires men by his personality and is not less but more important in building than stone masons and carpenters.

But all men with their gifts differing are necessary to the planning and pushing of the work, and each one should receive due recognition and reward.

"And they builded and finished it:" they did not lose heart and quit with walls halfway up, leaving a roofless and useless structure. Having put their hands to this plow they drove it to the end of the furrow and to the finishing of the field. They had grit as well as grace and in the face of opposition and many discouragements they carried the work on until the last stone was laid and their temple stood complete.

The grace and grit of perseverance are much needed in all our work, and it is a solemn teaching that no man, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

6. The Dedication

It was a great day in Isreal when the priests and people "kept the dedication of the house of God with joy." No doubt there was a great service with a throng of worshipers and a gorgeous ritual and offerings and incense and vested priests and instruments of music and antiphonal choirs. There were no old men sobbing on that day, unless they were weeping tears of joy, and it was with triumphant gladness that they all entered into the great service.

To dedicate anything is to set it apart and devote it to a special cause or use, and in this sense we dedicate our churches to the worship of God.

Having built and finished them we give them over to his service and thereafter they are restricted to this use. Yet the worship of God always expresses itself in the welfare of men, and the church is not to be shut up against any good work but is to be a community center and fountain of every kind of good to the people. Holiness and health and happiness are to flow from it in streams of teaching and activity. It is to be a place where we can gather and sing our most joyous songs and blow our most jubilant trumpets.

Dedication is to extend to all things, and we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God, which is our reasonable service.

The Eighty-fourth Psalm included in our lesson is an instance of the kind of psalms they sung on this occasion and there are many such in the hymn book of the Jews.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How long were they in building this temple?
2. Do other religions express themselves in temples and worship as much as Christianity?
3. How would you define pessimism and optimism?
4. What makes a pessimist and an optimist?
5. What great temple are we building in the world?

LESSON IX—SEPTEMBER 1

Ezra's Return to Jerusalem

Lesson: Ezra 7:1–8:36.

Golden Text: The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good. Ezra 8:22.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 63:1–8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How Prayer Helps.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Prayer and Providence.

Lesson Text: Ezra 7:6–10; 8:21–23, 31–32

6 This Ezra went up from Babylon. And he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which Jehovah, the God of Israel, had given; and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of Jehovah his God upon him.

7 And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinim, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.

8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.

9 For upon the first *day* of the first month began he to go up from Babylon; and on the first *day* of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.

10 For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances.

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

22 For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us.

31 Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth *day* of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the lier-in-wait by the way.

32 And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Ezra the Scribe.***
2. ***A Fast at the River.***
3. ***No Favors Asked.***
4. ***Good Business.***
5. ***Reform at Jerusalem.***

Seventy-eight years had passed since the first expedition of the exiles from Babylon arrived at Jerusalem under Zerubbabel. Things had not prospered at Jerusalem, but had gone from bad to worse, from discouragement to degeneracy. The building of the temple had been obstructed for fifteen years, and even yet the sacred edifice was in an incomplete and unsightly condition, The colony had not attracted the dispersed Jews and grown into a large and powerful city, as had been hoped, but had remained small and poor and feeble. The policy of exclusion that had shut out Samaritans and had aimed at inclosing the Jews in an impervious compartment had seemingly failed, and the pressure against it had grown so strong that it was relaxed and broken down.

Intermarriage with the surrounding heathen was the leak and break in the protective dike through which the sea of worldliness found entrance.

The flood came pouring through until Jerusalem was full of mixed and plural marriages.

Few things are more fatal to family religion and public morals than lack of affinity and looseness in the marital relation, and Jerusalem was again becoming degenerate and corrupt.

1. Ezra the Scribe

At this point in the history Ezra appears. He was a priest who is described as "a ready scribe in the law of Moses," who "set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."

Evidently he was just the man for the hour.

When there has been a falling away in religion and morality what is needed is a man that has set his heart to seek the law of God and to do it and to teach statutes and judgments. Law is the only corrective of laxity, and judgments for degeneracy.

When we have lapsed and gone astray the only hope for us is in seeking the Lord, and the law of Moses still contains the judgments we need.

Reports of the state of affairs in Jerusalem doubtless oppressed this good man, and he resolved upon a work of reformation. He began by appealing to Artaxerxes for authority and means to go.

Heavenly visions must have earthly agencies for their fulfillment and the successful servant of God must know how to see and seize the hand of man. The great king granted the priest his request.

The Jews were already rising into influence in Babylon and in all the great cities of the world, and kings and potentates were finding it expedient to pay some attention to their desires and interests. Artaxerxes wrote a letter or commission for Ezra that gave him large authority and means. He was to go to Jerusalem as governor-general with power to inquire into the civil and religious condition of the Jewish community and reform it "according to the law of thy God which is in thy hand." All the people of Israel who were in the king's realm and desired to emigrate to Jerusalem were given permission to go.

Large sums of money were also furnished Ezra with authority to draw on the King's treasury without limit. The king left no means unprovided and ordered that "whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done exactly for the house of the God of heaven." With these large powers and provisions Ezra set about his work.

He made sure of his plans and means before he set out on his enterprise, and this is a wise principle for us to follow in all our affairs.

2. A Fast at the River

About fifteen hundred Jews assembled at the river Ahava to start on the expedition. On looking over the company Ezra found that there were no Levites among them to serve in the temple, and dispatched priests to secure them; and the total number of the caravan was thus raised to about seventeen hundred and fifty.

All things now seemed ready, and yet the caravan did not start. Why? Because all things may seem to be ready, and yet something very vital to success may be lacking. The outward preparations of men and money, of every material provision, may be complete, but how about the inward preparation of mind and heart? Is faith firm and foresight clear? Is the heart teachable and trustful and the will resolute and strong?

These are vital questions that should be considered by those that are setting out on a responsible enterprise.

Ezra would make sure of this inward preparation, and so he "proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before God, to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance."

A fast is a religious exercise that our forefathers found serviceable, and that we still might find useful.

It reduces the body to its lowest terms in order that the soul may reach unhindered its highest state. It depresses the physical life that it may intensify the spiritual life in deeper meditation and more searching self-examination and fuller and finer communion with God.

The material is so masterful in our modern life that we need at times to escape from its pressure and live in the spirit.

Ezra had the people fast that they might humble themselves before God. Is not this one of the great needs?

How can the proud that fear not God nor regard man tread the sure way of wisdom and safety and success? They are blinded by their pride and shall go stumbling to their fall.

3. No Favors Asked

Why did not Ezra ask the king for an armed escort of soldiers to guard the caravan on its long and dangerous journey? It carried rich treasure and must travel upwards of a thousand miles through regions infested with robbers: was it not prudence to have protection? When Ezra could draw upon the king for means without limit, why did he not ask for a guard?

Because he was ashamed to do so.

"For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way." He had told the king that the hand of their God was upon them for good, and would he now show that he had no faith in such protection by asking for the king's soldiers and horsemen? This argument would not always be good, but it spurred Ezra to heroic trust.

Does not this very question now arise in connection with our foreign missionary work in China and in some other countries? Shall we depend upon and resort to our soldiers and warships to protect them?

Missionaries are now facing this question and some of them are taking the position that they must not resort to such force but trust God and take their chances. At any rate, while the church may draw upon the resources of the world and of worldly men and means in its work, there are limits beyond which it should not go.

It should beware of resorting to worldly means to accomplish its ends; and it should never use any means or take any attitude that implies any lack of faith in God and in the power of his own appointed means. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will make mention of the name of Jehovah our God."

4. Good Business

One other thing Ezra did before the caravan started. He took the silver and gold and precious vessels, had them carefully weighed and their value accurately determined and recorded, and then handed all the treasure over to twelve of the chief priests and ten other selected men. Besides the sacred vessels of gold there were a hundred and fifty talents of silver, silver vessels of a hundred talents, and a hundred talents of gold, the worth of the whole being between four and five millions of dollars (verse 24–30).

Ezra then charged the treasure keepers, "Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chiefs of the priests and the Levites, and the princes of the fathers' houses of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of Jehovah."

This was good business, good morals and good religion on the part of Ezra.

All this treasure had been committed by the king and people to him, yet he would not administer it privately and secretly as a personal trust, but committed it to other hands and had it all checked up and insisted on accurate bookkeeping and the fullest publicity.

This is the method that should govern all financial transactions in the church and out of it.

The private administration of public funds, looseness in accounts, and secrecy are dangerous methods that lead to suspicion and may lead to dishonesty and crime.

There is always need of business in religion as well as of religion in business, and the pastor especially should keep his hands out of the treasury and let other men attend to this business.

5. Reform at Jerusalem

Then the caravan departed and soon stretched its long line of marching men and women and children along the road towards Jerusalem. The good hand of God was upon them, and in due time they reached the sacred city.

What was Ezra's chief work there?

He saw how the law of Moses, which had been his life study and which he had especially come to enforce, was being violated in Jerusalem, the city in which above all other places on earth it should have been honored and obeyed. He saw the roots of the existing degeneracy were the heathen marriages that had corrupted the Jews. He therefore called upon the Israelites to put away their heathen wives and sternly executed this decree.

Our foreign missionaries are often confronted with the same hard situation and have to carry out the same severe policy, in connection with converts who have plural wives, though sometimes they try to soften its asperity.

Ezra thus cleansed Jerusalem from this pollution and saved the chosen people from being merged and lost in the heathen world. He is charged with being the father of the system of unyielding and mechanical legalism that grew and hardened into the dry and empty husks of Pharisaism. It is true that he was a scribe of somewhat narrow and unbending principles and practices that did issue in the Pharisaic formalities of later times.

Yet Ezra was right, as the Pilgrims and Puritans were right, whose principles and spirit we honor.

Ezra lived at a time when the people of Israel that had been chosen and trained for a special purpose were in danger of defeating that end by being dissolved in the surrounding sea of heathen worldliness and vice; and he erected around them the law of Moses and made it exclusive and unyielding only that it might protect and keep them as a

peculiar people that thus they might be saved themselves and might become the salt of the whole earth.

The wheat is enclosed in the field, not to keep it from the people, but to protect it from weeds that would smother it until it can ripen and then be distributed among the people. The Jews were the wheat field of the ancient world, and they were surrounded with a fence that they might ripen the grain that is now furnishing the world with the bread of life. A great religious teacher saw this point and instituted this reform, and never was the world in greater need of such religious teachers and statesmen than it is to-day. Our Christian society is now being endangered by the recrudescence of pagan faiths and cults and heathen vices that are infiltrating into our homes and colleges and social and political life and we must build bulwarks around them to protect them.

Only Christian education can raise barriers against anarchy and Bolshevism and social corruption and moral looseness and train up a generation of people that will keep the laws of the Lord, in keeping of which there is a great individual and social and national and international safety and prosperity and brotherhood.

These ancient laws are the foundation and fountain of life that is pure and stable and will stand the test of this world and of that which is to come.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Who are the scribes to-day and what use are they?
2. Why have we let fasting pass out of our modern life?
3. In what ways may we unwisely ask favors of worldly people?
4. What are some unbusinesslike methods used in church affairs?
5. Should we be discouraged with having to do much of our work over again?

LESSON X—SEPTEMBER 8

Nehemiah Rebuilding the Wall of Jerusalem

Lesson: Nehemiah 2:1–7:4.

Golden Text: The people had a mind to work. Nehemiah 4:6.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 85:1–7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Teamwork.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Coöperation in Religious Work.

Lesson Text: Nehemiah 4:4–6, 15–21

4 Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn back their reproach upon their own head, and give them up for a spoil in a land of captivity;

5 And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee; for they have provoked *thee* to anger before the builders.

6 So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto half *the height* thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

16 And it came to pass from that time forth, that half of my servants wrought in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah.

17 They that builded the wall and they that bare burdens laded themselves; every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held his weapon;

18 And the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another:

20 In what place soever ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us; our God will fight for us.

21 So we wrought in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Renewed Opposition.

2. Still Praying.

3. Setting a Watch.

4. Internal Discouragement.

5. The Courage of Faith.

6. Ready for Work or War.

The story opens with a new figure in the foreground. Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah steps upon the stage. Nothing is known of him beyond what is disclosed in this narrative. He was a captive Jew in Shushan who was born in captivity and therefore had never seen Jerusalem.

He tells us he was a cupbearer to the king. A cupbearer was far from being a menial servant but was really a favorite and counselor at court, a confidential minister of state. We also gather from chapter 5:16–18 that Nehemiah was a man of large private wealth, which he may have inherited or may have gained through his position.

He was a man of great ability and indomitable will, and, above all, of piety and prayer, of inflexible faith and heroic faithfulness. Here is another captive Jew who has risen to high position in a foreign court and is yet true to his fathers' God and to his own beloved land.

While serving as cupbearer, Nehemiah's sad countenance led the king to inquire the cause of his sorrow, and this opened the way for him to set forth the condition of his city and to ask that he might be sent to rebuild it.

The request was granted, and this pious patriot was soon in Jerusalem clothed with power for action. A night visit around the walls of the city disclosed the situation and enabled him to prepare and propose plans. The priests and people responded, "Let us rise up and build." The work was parceled out among forty-four groups or gangs of workmen, and the walls, having been begun about the first of July, B. C. 444, were finished in September of the same year.

Here is what one man of prayer and purpose, fire and force, can do. Nehemiah brought no new men to Jerusalem, but putting spirit and speed into the men that were there he so organized and energized them that they were able to do what they thought could not be done.

1. Renewed Opposition

The rebuilding of the city again encountered opposition. Sanballet and Tobiah, the Arabians and Ammonites and the Ashdodites, surrounding heathen people, when they saw the walls going up and the breaches stopped were wroth and conspired together to fight against Jerusalem and hinder the work.

They feared if the city were restored they would lose their power of petty tyranny and be reduced to subjection.

All the forces of political and religious rancor were organized and let loose against the project.

Jerusalem could be rebuilt only at the cost of a battle.

It always has been so and is so to-day. The forces of evil have never been so completely suppressed and supplanted that they remain quiescent in the front of advancing good.

The building of the kingdom of God on earth is a mighty battle that has convulsed all the ages and is still raging.

There is everywhere a powerful conspiracy of unbelief and worldliness and vice to prevent the walls of this kingdom from rising and their breaches from being closed.

We may see one form of this attack in the effort to overthrow the prohibition of the drink evil and undo the work of more than a century in building the walls of temperance. And the same opposition beats against the kingdom as it rises in the individual soul.

2. Still Praying

What did Nehemiah and his workers do in the face of this formidable conspiracy and opposition? Drop the work in fear and discouragement and slip back into cowardly indifference and neglect? No, the man that prayed so earnestly in Shushan and came all the way to Jerusalem to carry out his prayer could not be guilty of such weakness and shame. "But we made our prayer unto our God" (verse 9), says Nehemiah in words that ring with the note of victory. What we need is that spinal stiffness and staunchness that can face the most trying opposition and nevertheless not sink down or fall back, but stand up and go forward.

Temptation and trial should make us true to our duty and task never the less but always the more.

"But we made our prayer unto God."

Still praying was this man Nehemiah.

One would have thought that by this time he would have lost faith in prayer. He had been praying for many months, and what had

prayer done for him but led him into an ambuscade of conspiracy that was about to break loose upon him in deadly hate? Why not stop praying and do something practical?

Because praying is "something practical."

What can be more practical in entering upon an undertaking than first to clasp hands with God who has all power in heaven and on earth.

We make no mistake, we waste no time and energy, when in the hour of trial and discouragement we make our prayer unto God.

3. Setting a Watch

Nehemiah, however, did not stop working. "But we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them."

The vision of prayer that opened his eyes to see God did not make him less keen and vigilant in watching men.

He did not expect that the breath of his prayer would blow his enemies away, but he rose from his knees to throw himself with all his might into defensive action.

Pray, and then set a watch! was Nehemiah's rule.

Cromwell's rule was framed on the same principle: "Trust God and keep your powder dry." On the same principle Dr. Chalmers said that we should pray as though all depended on God and then work as though all depended on man.

It thus appears that prayer is no easy road or short cut to our ends but is only preparation and power for action.

It is not a way in which we get God to do our work for us; rather it is a way in which God gets us to do his work for him.

The true nature of prayer is expressed in James 5:16, which has been translated, "The prayer of a righteous man is of great force when energized." The point is plain.

We must energize our prayers.

Uttered as mere pious wishes, they may be only so much empty breath and troubled air; but when we put into them our energies, turning our wish into work, such prayer is "of great force."

Prayer, then, is girding up our loins for the burden; it is a call to battle, a way of coworking with God.

Instead of releasing us from our duty and work, it sends us right back into our work to enter into it with renewed consecration and intensified energy. The difference prayer makes is that after we have offered it we know and feel that God is coworking with us and in us, and if God be for us who can be against us?

"Watch and pray," is the Master's own command, and either without the other is only half our duty and it takes both to make the full-orbed prayer of power.

4. Internal Discouragement

Opposition from without was not the only discouragement that the workers encountered. Resistance also sprang up from within. "And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall."

Such words from the men of Judah, the very Jews in Jerusalem, must have fallen heavily and sorely upon the heart of Nehemiah after he had come so far to help them.

The Jews that dwelt on the border of the enemies also came to Jerusalem and offered discouraging advice.

These faint-hearted and frightened Jews pleaded that they had been exhausted by toil and hardship, pointed to the piles of rubbish and declared that they were not able to carry on the job. As the walls rose higher and the work grew harder, the novelty of the enterprise wore off, and the threatening attitude of the enemies at length overcame the courage of some and they wanted to throw down their tools and quit.

It is hard enough to meet the opposition of open enemies, but it is harder still to withstand the discouraging attitude and obstruction or the cowardice of friends.

The kingdom of God as it is represented in the church is divided and disturbed with no little measure of this internal trouble. The divisions of the church sometimes set it against itself and thus distract and weaken it.

The local congregation and our individual work are often discouraged

in the same way. Probably few are the instances in which a congregation sets out on the enterprise of building a new church that it does not meet with this internal opposition.

The kingdom of God and the church call for coöperation, and we should all join together in this work. Teamwork is as necessary for successful work in the church and kingdom as it is on other fields in life.

5. The Courage of Faith

Nehemiah now took decisive measures to meet the enemy and inspire the people. Behind the walls he arrayed men armed with swords and spears and bows so stationed that they could be seen by the enemies outside. Then he delivered an inspiring pious and patriotic speech to the nobles and rulers and rest of the people: "Our God will fight for us." "Be ye not afraid of them: remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

Here is the courage of faith.

Nehemiah first turned the people towards the enemies that looked so formidable and filled them with fear, and then he turned them to the Lord and bade them remember how great and terrible he is. And in bidding them to "fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses," he swept all the chords of their hearts and homes and smote them into passion. Homes, sons, daughters, wives, what can so deeply appeal to us and so powerfully move us into action?

Here the man of prayer becomes a master of statesmanship and marshals all the forces, material and spiritual, for the defense of his country.

He who prays most earnestly may also prepare for conflict most vigorously and fight most valiently and victoriously.

Religion does not make weak men, but men who are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

6. Ready for Work or War

When the enemies saw the glitter of steel behind the walls their hostile advance received a pause. Their plan of hidden surprise and

overwhelming attack was thwarted, their terrible threats turned out to be idle words, and they stayed at a respectful distance.

Having halted the advance of the enemies, what did Nehemiah and his workers now do? Sit still and watch Sanballat and Tobiah? No, "we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work."

It is poor policy simply to watch enemies; we must do something positive and push forward our cause.

Building the wall of righteousness is in itself an efficient way of battling against evil. General Grant once sat silent in his tent with his generals while they discussed what the enemy was going to do. At last he spoke up and said, "Let us now consider what we are going to do."

Yet these Jews also deftly combined work with war.

Half of them worked on the walls and the other half stood armed with spears and shields, and "every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held his weapon."

War could not keep them from work, and work could not keep them from being ready for war.

They could lay a stone on the wall with a trowel or thrust an enemy through with a spear as duty required.

So ought we to be armed and prepared that we can at the same time build the city of God and beat back the attacks of the devil.

Let us not be so intent on watching evil that we cannot do good, or so absorbed in doing good that we cannot watch and resist evil, but be prepared for and engaged in both, brave in war and faithful in work.

Thus the leadership of one man reorganized the divided forces at Jerusalem and massed them into the real living walls of Jerusalem, which then soon built the walls of stone.

Leadership is a prime requisite in every undertaking.

The appearance of Napoleon on the field of battle was said to be equal to the arrival of fifty thousand fresh troops, and the appointment of Foch to the supreme command of all the armies was the decisive turning point in the Great War.

We have a masterful Leader and Captain of our salvation, and we should all unitedly follow him to victory.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give Scripture instances of successful prayer.
2. What are the points of a good prayer?
3. How did the people come to have "a mind to work"?
4. Is it right to use physical force for spiritual ends?
5. What are the chief weapons of our warfare?
6. What walls are we building in the world?

LESSON XI—SEPTEMBER 15

Teaching the Law of God

Lesson: Nehemiah 8:1–18.

Golden Text: The opening of thy words giveth light. Psalm 119:130.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:97–104.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Finding Joy in God's Work.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Call for Trained Teachers.

Lesson Text: Nehemiah 8:1–3, 5–6, 8–12

1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel.

2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

3 And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were *attentive* unto the book of the law.

5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people); and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

6 And Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground.

8 And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading.

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye grieved; for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.

11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *The Law of the Lord Brought Forth.*
2. *A Great Community Bible Study.*

3. The First Pulpit.
4. Law Distinctly Read and Explained.
5. Sorrow and Joy.

While the wall was going up there was a great cry raised by the poor against the rich because of profiteering and oppression in Jerusalem, showing us ancient forms of these modern abuses. The wealthier Jews were lending money to their poor brethren, charging them ruinous rates of interest and foreclosing mortgages on their land.

Nehemiah redressed these economic evils by restoring the lands and remitting the interest.

Sanballat and Tobiah also kept up their machinations. They tried to inveigle Nehemiah into a conference in a distant village, hoping to catch him and probably to assassinate him, but Nehemiah saw through their cunning and refused to walk into their trap. At length the wall was finished in fifty-two days, and then followed the event of this lesson.

1. The Law of the Lord Brought Forth

The important fact about a city is not the wall around it but the kind of people within it. If a wall is only to shut in a nest of robbers or a pool of corruption, it were better not built.

The wall around Jerusalem derived its value from the people safeguarded behind it. They were worth more to the world than any other people on the earth.

The wall having been completed, all the inhabitants gathered themselves together as one man in the street, and called upon Ezra the scribe to bring the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel. This is the first mention of Ezra in this book, and it is supposed that he had been absent for a number of years engaged in compiling and editing the law of Moses.

A unanimous demand from the people for the reading of the Word of God—what a promising sign was this of moral and spiritual health and coming blessing!

These people were not so absorbed in material building that they had no time and thought for spiritual interests; they did not build that wall up between themselves and their worship. Many men in these days are often so devoted to the pursuit of money that they neglect

and come to despise their higher welfare, they build up walls of wealth that shut out the blue sky and the face of God.

But when people are hungering for the Word of God, all their spiritual faculties are alive, and they shall receive life more abundant and blessed.

Ezra the scribe was ready with the law. When the demand for him came he was prepared, and every scribe and teacher of God's Word should be ready through such study and preparation as will enable him to meet his opportunities and fulfill the demands made upon him. Ezra brought the law before the congregation of both men and women and of all that could hear with understanding.

That was an ideal congregation.

2. A Great Community Bible Study

Ezra read the law before that great congregation of forty-two thousand, besides thousands of servants (7:66–67), and though probably all were not present yet they filled the public square before the water gate on the east side of the city and stood from morning till noon. Priests stood by Ezra's side and doubtless took turns at helping him.

It was a great community meeting for the study of the Bible.

The people were not afraid of being wearied with worship and did not demand that the sermon be cut down to twenty minutes and that the whole service be not more than an hour long, but they went through and enjoyed a service that lasted from daylight until midday. We have become so delicate and fastidious that we cannot endure the least weariness and snap our watches to warn the minister from running over the hour.

People that are so interested in the worship that they forget the clock and lose all sense of time get some bread out of the service that will develop robust spiritual life and last many days.

The interest in this service was shown in the fact that "the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law."

Attention is the secret of good hearing, and good hearing contributes inspiringly to good preaching; and no doubt one reason

that there is so much poor preaching up in the pulpit is that there is so much lamentably poor hearing down in the pews.

The word attention means stretching the mind towards the subject being presented. Attention, then, is not a lazy languid state of mind, mere emptiness into which something is being poured, but it is an active and earnest effort to see and seize and assimilate the truth.

The truths of God's Word are so great and grand and vital and blessed that we should never sit passive under them and let them slip idly off our minds, but we should stretch all our faculties to grasp them and feed upon them.

3. The First Pulpit

The method by which the law was read is worth noting. Ezra "stood upon a pulpit of wood." This is the first mention of the "pulpit" in history, and it marks the beginning of a new method and a new era.

This is the first time of which we have record in which the Word of God was preached from a pulpit.

Hitherto the religion of Israel had been largely proclaimed through priest and prophet using sacrifice and symbol. The temple had grown up into a vast ritualistic system that invested worship in the gorgeous garb of ceremony. This simple wooden pulpit dispensed with all symbols and addressed the people directly, reading the Word of God and explaining it in everyday speech. The day Ezra went up into that pulpit ritualistic worship appealing to the senses began to wane, and spiritual worship addressed directly to the reason and conscience and heart began to increase.

Henceforth the priest was to be less and less, and the preacher more and more.

That unadorned wooden pulpit looked pitifully plain and impotent as it stood under the shadow of the great temple, but it was destined to displace the temple and fill the whole earth. Ezra, narrow scribe as he was, was the first preacher and was the forerunner of Paul and Augustine and Luther, and his pulpit has become the throne of the Christian world.

The preacher, however, did not monopolize the whole service, but the people had a part.

When Ezra blessed Jehovah the great God, " all the people answered, Amen, and Amen," a good Methodist response that used to be frequently heard from the people, but we have now grown so formal and " cultured " that it has been silenced in many churches where it once rang out in vibrant and vital tones.

The pulpit should not do all the worshiping or all the speaking, but should leave something for the pew, and responsive reading now increasingly prevalent in our churches gives the congregation a larger share in the service.

4. The Law Read Distinctly and Explained

The manner in which the law was read is instructive.

" They read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly." No hurrying through the passage, slurring the syllables and mumbling and muttering the words and droning and chanting singsong monotones in an unintelligible voice; but the voice was natural and strong, each sound was distinctly enunciated, each syllable was sharp-cut and clean, every word fell from the lips of the reader as a newly-minted coin, or issued clear as the stroke of a bell, or rang out vibrant and strenuous as the blare of a trumpet, and every listener throughout that vast audience could hear with distinctness and ease.

In this respect the first pulpit set a good example for all pulpits.

The way the Bible is read in some pulpits would be ludicrous were it not so painful to a practical mind and a reverent soul. What is the use of hurrying through and mumbling over and whining out a passage of Scripture, if it is not to be heard and understood?

Better close the book than butcher it in cold blood.

Reading in a natural tone and distinct voice is a fine art that every one should cultivate, and nowhere is it more useful and beautiful than in the pulpit and in all reading of the Word of God.

Not only did they read the law distinctly, but " they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading."

The law of Moses was written in a language that had become somewhat antiquated and obsolete to these Babylonian and Persian Jews, and so it needed to be explained.

This is still the business of the scholar and preacher and teacher.

We are to translate these ancient laws into modern speech so that they will be living realities that will come home to every one's business and bosom. The religion of the Bible is too often introduced to us as though it were a stranger and a foreigner in the world, speaking a language that we do not understand.

We must dress it up in the garb of to-day and make it speak in our own tongue.

Then we shall recognize it as a friend that will walk by our side and help us in all the affairs of life. We must learn to translate these teachings into our own thought and feeling, carrying our consciousness back into the consciousness of these prophets and apostles, pouring their thoughts into our minds and kindling our souls into the glow and aspiration of their feelings. These words have the wonderful power of reproducing their ideas in our minds and reconstructing the whole stage and scenery and life of that ancient time before our eyes. They are bridges uniting our minds with these inspired minds over which roll the commerce of their thoughts and aspirations into our hearts.

Nothing is so useful and vital and invigorating as the law of the Lord when we are given its sense and read it with understanding.

5. Sorrow and Joy

What was the result of this reading and preaching from Ezra's pulpit? "All the people wept, when they heard the words of the law." This law convinced them of sin and righteousness and judgment to come, and they were seized with penitence that could express itself only in tears. The reading may be ever so distinct and beautiful, it may charm every hearer with its mellifluous music, but if it brings conviction to no conscience, penitence to no heart, tears to no eyes, help to no soul, it is in vain.

Reading and preaching and teaching the Bible is serious business that should prove its usefulness and efficiency by convicted and converted souls.

If we turn it into "the day's work" for pay, or into a performance for praise, we prostitute it to unworthy ends and are unfaithful to our

high privilege and opportunity. Let us be thankful for such service and render and enter into it with the spirit and the understanding that God may bless our work and His Word may not return unto him void.

Nehemiah and Ezra, however, turned the people from their tears to feasting and joy. It was right that they should weep, but it was a feast time and the law of Moses had some better news for them than mere conviction and judgment. "So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them."

The Word of God begins with law that should work mighty conviction and bring forth tears, but it ends with wonderful grace, good tidings of great joy, that should dry our tears and turn life into gladness and song.

We sometimes get the impression that religion is a "joy-killer," suppressing even the natural emotions of gladness and humor and laughter and spreading gloom over all our days. There have been religious views and practices that gave color to this impression, but it is foreign to the Bible which breathes the spirit of joy from beginning to end.

To be saved is not to be sad, and a long face is no proof of superlative piety.

The gospel is good news, the gladdest tidings that ever came to cheer the world, and we are false to its spirit if we do not know and express this joy. "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice," says Paul, and if he could rejoice in his hard circumstances, how much more should we have the same spirit.

Such were the results of this great community study of the Bible, and the book is still the power of God unto salvation.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is a law?
2. What are some of the advantages of community study?
3. What are the points of a good pulpit?
4. How can we learn to read distinctly?
5. Are sorrow and joy mutually exclusive or are they complementary?

LESSON XII—SEPTEMBER 22

Malachi Foretells a New Day

Lesson: Malachi 1:1–4:6.

Golden Text: Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. Malachi 3:1.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 11:1–10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Our Part in Bringing in a Better Day.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Preparing the Way of the Lord.

Lesson Text: Malachi 3:1–12

1 Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye desire, behold, he cometh, saith Jehovah of hosts.

2 But who can abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

3 And he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto Jehovah offerings in righteousness.

4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto Jehovah, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the sojourner *from his right*, and fear not me, saith Jehovah of hosts.

6 For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

7 From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return?

8 Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough *to receive it*.

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, saith Jehovah of hosts.

12 And all nations shall call you happy; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith Jehovah of hosts.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Preparing the Way of the Lord.

2. The Preparation of Repentance.

3. Definite Judgments.
4. Robbing God.
5. Grace for Gold.

Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and after his voice was hushed there was prophetic silence in Israel for four hundred years.

Perhaps the explanation was that the Old Testament was now complete, and the Bible took the place of the prophet.

Malachi was probably a contemporary with Nehemiah, and his teaching prepared the way for the reforms Nehemiah wrought in Jerusalem. He opens his argument with the apostate people by setting forth the divine love for Israel: "I have loved you, saith Jehovah."

This is the starting point of all the divine pleadings, the basis of all God's dealings with us.

Insensate Israel wanted to know wherein God had loved them and were pointed to neighboring nations as proof of mercy for them. This controversy between God and Israel runs through the book.

1. Preparing the Way of the Lord

The Lord made a promise to Israel that he would send a messenger to prepare the way before his coming.

Such promises and prophecies always had an immediate application in the experience of the people to whom they were addressed, for prophecies relating to some far future event with no reference to the present would be vague, unintelligible and useless.

The immediate application of this promise may have been to Nehemiah, who was then absent in Persia and who on his return wrought reform in Jerusalem.

But this immediate reference of prophecy did not necessarily exhaust it, and it may also run forward into the future.

This prophecy was expressly applied to John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus (Matt. 11:10), and it may be further applied to anyone who serves to prepare the way of the Lord.

Strange as it may seem, the Lord needs human forerunners to prepare his way.

Why did not Christ come as the Saviour of the world in the beginning?

Because the world was not ready for him.

Why does not the farmer sow the seed in the ground without waiting to plough and harrow it? Why does not a physician begin to practice medicine without taking years to go through a course of medical education? Such questions answer themselves. The soil must be ready for the seed, which would simply perish if thrown upon the unploughed ground.

Preparation must precede practice.

It would have been of little use to bring Sir Isaac Newton into the world seventeen centuries before Christ: he could do his peculiar work only seventeen centuries after Christ when the world was ready for him.

The world had to be put through a long course of education before it was ready to receive Jesus Christ and furnish him a soil in which his seed could grow.

All the prophets of the Old Testament were forerunners of the Messiah, preparing the people for his coming by teaching them the great truths of sin and repentance and righteousness and faith. The same kind of work must still be done in the world on a vaster scale than ever before.

Every minister and Sabbath school teacher and true Christian is thus helping to prepare the way for Christ. It is a great work and privilege and we should be faithful to it.

2. The Preparation of Repentance

What was the work which the forerunner was to do? "He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap." His mission is to purify and refine.

Evil must go out before good can come in; repentance must precede pardon and peace.

The gold and silver ore is mixed with base earth and metals, and it must be subjected to fire to separate the dross from the precious metal. The refiner sits by the furnace in which the mixed mass is boiling, waiting until the critical moment when he sees the separation has been effected, and the dross floats as scum on the surface. It is said that he watches for his own image reflected on the bright surface of the pure metal and then he removes it. So must we be subjected to discipline that we may be conscious of our sins and may repent of them with such sincerity as will separate them from us and leave our souls pure, reflecting the restored image of God.

To this end God often deals with us in what may seem a hard and cruel way.

He puts us into the fire of punishment and affliction that we may realize what sin is and have it burned out of us.

The fuller's soap is another figure teaching the same truth. The strong alkali of the potash eats out the impurities from the cloth, leaving it clean and white.

So the Spirit of God in our hearts eats out the impurities of sin, cleansing us from all unrighteousness and making us whiter than snow.

John the Baptist preached the need and duty of repentance as a preparation for the coming of Christ, and the same repentance is needed as a preparation for the coming of Christ into our hearts and into the world.

3. Definite Judgments

The Bible grows very definite in its charges against us. It has little to say about sin in the abstract, but much against sins in the concrete, and it names them right out and puts its finger on them. The Lord speaking through the prophet now proceeds to name the sins then prevalent in Jerusalem.

The catalogue reads like a page from one of our morning newspapers.

"I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers,"—are the sorcerers all dead? Is this a worn-out superstition among us? Open your morning paper and read the advertisements of "mediums" and "palmists"

and "spiritualists" and all their kin and say whether there are not still among us "sorcerers" plying their trade upon their dupes.

"And against adulterers"—is this sin still a sin in our day? The social evil is rampant in all our cities and prevails everywhere, and some think it is the greatest single evil in the world. The divorce courts furnish other evidence to this charge.

"And against the false swearers"—another still prevalent evil. To say nothing of false witnesses in court cases, is not lying a terrible evil amongst us, corrupting our business and political life and poisoning the very fountains of all our life?

"And against those that oppress the hireling in his wages"—there were evidently labor troubles in those days, greedy and dishonest employers who ground down wages and cheated men out of their just share, and this evil is still disturbing our industrial life with strife and hatred between labor and capital.

"And against those that oppress the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the sojourner from his right"—evidently there were men, such as bank directors, in those days, who were expert at enriching themselves at the expense of the widow and fatherless and stranger.

These ancient sins are also modern and confront us in our daily life. They furnish the sensational headlines in our newspapers and threaten at times to disturb and distract, if not wreck, our social order.

We still need righteous forerunners to rebuke and clear away these evils and thus prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.

4. Robbing God

The controversy now passes over to another point where the people of Israel are charged with another offense. "Will a man rob God?" Verily he has done so and will. Men that would not think of robbing one another will yet pursue conduct and develop character along lines that involve the robbery of the Most High.

A man's whole life may be a robbery of God.

What do we owe him? Do we not owe him all that we have and are, external property and internal power? And in so far as we use these so as to deprive him of their service and glory, we deny him his right and are robbers in his sight.

There is an immense amount of such robbery of God going in our day as is witnessed by the shortage of men and money in the business of carrying on his kingdom in the world, which is a vast business enterprise calling for large means in comparison with the pittance that is cast into its treasury.

These unfaithful Jews protested their ignorance of the meaning of the charge and received the pointed specification, "In tithes and offerings." This was a very coarse and vulgar form of robbery, just so much money or produce they were withholding from the Lord.

We have not forgotten how to withhold the tithes and offerings.

It is true that we may not be bound down to a specified proportion in our giving, for we have graduated out of the system of rules that were appropriate to the childhood of the church and have been admitted into the larger liberty and freer methods of the gospel. The tithe, or rather two tithes, is the rule of the Old Testament, but the New Testament enjoins us on the first day of the week to lay by us in store as God has prospered us.

Only the form of the old rule is changed, its spirit remains and is expanded into the freer but not less systematic new rule.

Giving is still to be done according to system and not in a haphazard way. A certain proportion of our income is to be given to the Lord's work, and this part is to keep pace with our prosperity. This part in many cases should be not less than one tenth and in some cases it should be more, but this is a point which every one in the light of his Christian conscience must decide for himself.

Let every one be fully assured in his own mind.

But we should have a system, and in so far as we fall below our part and ratio we rob God in our offerings.

No doubt one consideration in determining our proportion is how much we have left. The rich cast much into the treasury under the eye of our Lord, but their much was really little because they had so much left. But the poor widow casting a few cents into the same treasury received great commendation because she gave all she had and had nothing left.

By this rule many of us fall woefully short of giving our share.

5. Gold for Grace

The giving of the tithes is coupled with a great promise. Let the Jews bring their tithes into the storehouse, and the Lord would open the windows of heaven and pour them out a blessing that there would not be room to receive.

Is there any connection between material gifts and spiritual blessings that the offering of the one will call down the other?

There is no mechanical or magical connection. Gold cannot buy or compel gospel grace, and one might bring a great offering into the church and carry no spiritual blessing out.

Yet there is a real and vital connection between the state of heart that gives its offerings unto the Lord and the coming of his grace.

Such an offering is an expression of trust and obedience, of loyalty and love, of a Christlike spirit of service and sacrifice, and these are the very conditions that call down and make room for the Holy Spirit in a plentitude of blessing. A heart that refuses to give is a narrow and cold heart shut up against the Spirit of God; but a heart that is faithful and generous in giving is a large and open heart that is an urgent invitation and warm welcome to the Spirit of God and will surely receive a gracious visitation.

Freely we have received, let us freely give, and our gifts will open the very windows of heaven and let down upon us abundant showers of blessing.

Solomon refused gold and then he got grace in unprecedented fullness. He got the blessing of heaven because he asked for it, and then received the blessing of earth because he did not ask for it.

He preferred grace to gold and then he got both.

It is even so yet that if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, we shall be made rich in the wealth of God and then all earthly blessings shall be added unto us in their due time and best measure.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What are some of the roads for the coming of Christ we should now build?
2. What are some of the sins that are most obstructive to his coming?
3. Can Christians be guilty of the sins Malachi denounced?
4. What proportion of their means are Christians now giving to the Lord?
5. Would there be danger in the church's having too much money?

LESSON XIII—SEPTEMBER 29

Review: Significance of the Exile and the Restoration

Golden Text: The loving-kindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children. Psalm 103:17.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 61:1–9.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Some Great Men of the Period.

Topic for Young People and Adults: God's Providence in the Exile and the Restoration.

The significance of any event is the value that comes out of it, and exile derived its significance for Israel in the education they gained from it.

It cured them of idolatry and broadened their world view and strengthened their faith and prepared them for the great part they were to play in the redemption of the world.

Its leading men were Ezekiel and Daniel, Nehemiah and Ezra, the period closing with Malachi the last prophet of the Old Testament.

1. The Story of Ezekiel

Ezekiel, a prophet in Jerusalem in its last days, went with its inhabitants into captivity in Babylon and there instructed and encouraged them. He was commanded to "go" to the house of Israel, and we must go after people to win them to God. Yet he was given the words he should speak, and our message is given to us in all the teachings of the Word of God. The house of Israel were not a people of strange speech, so that the prophet could speak to them in their own tongue.

It is a fine art in us as Christian preachers and teachers to be able to adapt our language to our hearers so as to bring the message home to them.

Yet Israel were a people of "a hard forehead and of a stiff heart," and we are not to be surprised or discouraged when we find that in our Christian work we often must deal with the same kind of people. The

prophet had first to receive the words he taught in his own heart, and this is ever a prerequisite of a teacher.

No one can teach to others what he does not know and have in himself.

A hard trial was put upon the prophet when "the desire of his eyes" was taken from him in death and yet he was forbidden to mourn.

We must illustrate our faith and courage in our own calmness and steadfastness in trial.

2. Ezekiel Teaches Personal Responsibility

Ezekiel not only prophesied judgment upon the hostile nations surrounding Judah, but he also turned in condemnation upon his own city and people. He was set as a watchman unto the house of Israel and must tell them the truth in warning.

The watchman is still an important person in our world.

His responsibility was great, for if others perished through his failure to warn them, then he must answer with his own life.

Many are committed to our keeping, and we must answer for them.

Israel seemed to be caught in a hard way of judgment, but they did not need to give up in despair for there was an outlet of escape for them. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die?"

The same gracious appeal and promise is ever pressed upon us.

The judgments of God are not arbitrary or unjust in any way, but are fair and righteous altogether. And God himself has canceled the old debt and we can start with a clean balance sheet. The sinner "shall surely live."

When we do "that which is lawful and right" in penitence and faith then the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ shall avail for our salvation.

3. Ezekiel's Vision of Hope

Ezekiel was a poet-prophet and conveyed truth in picturesque forms and golden dreams. He draws a picture of a river of salvation

that shall make glad the city of God. The stream issued from the threshold of God, for God is the source of all good.

Spiritual thirst is as real and clamant as physical thirst, and God has not forgotten to provide for its satisfaction.

The stream is an ever deeping river. All our streams of blessing started as small springs and then broadened their current. The river of civilization is a majestic deepening gulf stream flowing through the centuries, and the kingdom of God follows the same principle.

The stream that issued from the rocky ledge of Bethlehem is now a mighty religious river that is reaching the ends of the earth.

The banks of the river are lined with trees, for this stream is not a destructive flood but a mother of life and fruit and beauty. Its waters are healing, everywhere seeking out the lowest pits of corruption and the foulest swamps of vice and purifying and sweetening them.

Yet there are some swamps that refuse to be healed, and they must abide in their own bitterness. Manifold fruitfulness marks the course of this stream.

And "the waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary." We should make the church such a fountain of healing, life-giving waters to the world.

4. The Story of Daniel

Daniel was a Hebrew captive in Babylon and is one of the heroic figures and charming characters in the Bible. He with others was chosen to be educated in the Chaldean language and learning, and thus was sent to college.

Peculiar temptations came upon him in the new situation, and this is a fact that confronts all our young people on leaving home.

But Daniel determined in his heart that he would not yield to the temptation and in that strong resolution lay the assurance of his victory. He met the temptation, not with an uncivil refusal, but with a courteous and fair proposal, and this offer was accepted by the steward who was responsible for his keeping. He proposed abstinence from the king's wine and highly-spiced meats.

The boys were not only abstemious but were also studious, for nothing will take the place of hard work at college.

At length the day of grading and graduation came, and then it turned out that Daniel and his companions stood at the head of their class.

A further experience of Daniel is related when he was able to interpret a dream of the Babylonian king that all his wise men could not reproduce and explain, and Daniel blessed God and returned thanksgiving for his success.

5. Belshazzar's Feast (Temperance Lesson)

A great feast was in progress in Belshazzar's banquet hall and a strange inscription appeared upon the wall creating consternation in the king and his reveling guests. A splendid offer was made to any one who would interpret the writing, but Daniel would not accept any pay for such service.

He was not a prophet out for profit.

Daniel began his speech by complimenting the king on his great father, and then boldly charged the son with not having humbled his heart, something many of us have failed to do. He specified the king's evil doings in a terrible catalogue. Then he proceeded to interpret the strange letters on the wall. They were ominous with meaning for the proud Belshazzar and foretold his short weight in character and his divided kingdom.

May we not at times see the same letters written upon the walls of our record and conscience?

Swift judgment followed Daniel's revelation and "that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain."

Justice still gets done in the world sooner or later and we need to be prepared against it.

6. Daniel Among the Lions

The sorest trial now came upon Daniel. He had been raised to high power in the kingdom, but this elicited the envy and hatred of rivals and enemies and they plotted against him. A decree was secured

from the king that no prayer should be offered for thirty days, and these enemies thought they had Daniel in their trap.

But he kept right on praying as his custom was.

The conspirators brought against him their hypocritical charge that he was breaking the king's law, and the king himself was greatly perplexed when he discovered the situation. But the law could not be changed, and so Daniel was dropped into the den of lions.

Then came the strange intervention of God by which Daniel was delivered and his faith was vindicated and rewarded.

"Dare to be a Daniel" is the moral of the story.

7. The Return from Captivity

A turning point comes in the history of the Jews in their return from captivity to Jerusalem.

Captivity has done its work.

The new era opens with a heathen king directing events, yet he is under the direction of the King of kings. Cyrus declared he had been charged by Jehovah to build him a house in Jerusalem, and volunteers were called for to carry out the enterprise.

Many offered themselves and a sifting-out process selected the ones best adapted to the adventure and work. The returning exiles were liberally supplied with means, and it still takes money to make the enterprises of God go.

The sacred vessels that had been taken as loot out of the temple at Jerusalem when it was captured were returned with the exiles, and precious vessels are still appropriate in the sanctuary. The Jews broke into song in their celebration of joyous events and we are given a specimen of such psalms.

8. Rebuilding the Temple

Fifty thousand returned exiles are now found in Jerusalem to begin the work of rebuilding the ruined city.

They put the first thing first by setting the altar in its place and beginning daily worship.

God should always be first in our life, and we should set up the altar of prayer as the center of all our work.

The laying of the foundation was attended with songs and shouts of joy, and yet there were pessimists present who mingled their tears and sobs along with the songs and shouts. They compared the new foundations with the old and thought they could not amount to much. But we should have faith and foresight to see in unpromising beginnings the fruition of the full-grown seed and completed work.

Opposition grew up against the work, as it always does.

Yet in time the temple was finished and a great day of dedication was observed.

All our possessions and achievements should be dedicated unto God.

9. Ezra's Return to Jerusalem

A second expedition arrived in Jerusalem seventy-eight years after the first. Things had not gone well in the enterprise, and mixed marriages with the heathen had corrupted the people.

Ezra the scribe appears at this point, the man for the hour.

He organized an expedition under the authority of Artaxerxes, but halted the caravan at the river Ahava to hold a fast.

Quiet meditation was a needed preparation for the coming hardships.

Ezra would ask of the king none of his soldiers to protect the caravan, for he had declared that God would guard them and was ashamed of falling back on worldly help.

He was a good business man and had all the treasures inventoried and put in charge of proper officers, an example and principle that should be followed in all our church financial affairs.

Arrived at Jerusalem Ezra instituted a bold reform in calling upon the Israelites to put away their plural wives and sternly executed this decree.

This very problem now confronts us on some of our foreign mission fields. Ezra knew what he was doing.

10. Nehemiah Rebuilding the Wall of Jerusalem

A new figure now appears on the scene, Nehemiah. Successive workers must take their places on the walls of the kingdom of God and keep the work going from one generation to another.

Nehemiah was an officer in the court of the Babylonian king and was deputed by him to go to Jerusalem and carry on the work of rebuilding. He encountered new opposition to the work, but he still prayed unto Jehovah to help him to carry on.

However he was not only pious but also practical and set a watch on the walls to keep an eye on the enemy. "Watch and pray" is the Scriptural injunction.

Nehemiah also encountered internal opposition to the work, and this is always the hardest to bear.

But he had the courage of his faith and carried through.

11. Teaching the Law of the Lord

There were profiteers in Jerusalem and Nehemiah dealt with these with a severe hand.

The main thing about a city are not the walls around it but the kind of people within it.

Nehemiah brought forth the law of Jehovah and held a great community Bible reading. He set up the first pulpit of which we read and instituted a new method of public worship.

Henceforth the altar and priest were to grow less important in the Christian religion, and the pulpit and the Bible were to fill an ever larger place.

Very important it is to notice and imitate the manner of the reading: the law was read distinctly and its meaning explained.

No use reading the Bible if it is muttered so that it cannot be heard.

Sorrow and joy attended this reading.

Conviction resulted in penitence and penitence in peace and joy.

12. Malachi Foretells a New Day

Christianity is always telling of a new day, for it is supremely a religion of hope. Malachi preached the duty of preparing the way of the Lord and this duty is still upon us. The best preparation for the coming of the Lord is repentance. This means that we must put

away our sins and stop robbing God and then we shall get grace and all good things shall be added unto us.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give other instances in which national afflictions have worked for national good.
2. Why are great leaders so necessary and important in national life?
3. How can we trace the hand of God in our nation's history?

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH QUARTER

The social teachings of religion are no modern discovery for they run all through the Scriptures from the beginning to the end. The Ten Commandments are tremendous social teachings, and the later prophets were great preachers who applied the principles of religion to all the problems of their day, civil and religious, national and international.

When we enter the New Testament we at once meet with the social application of the gospel by Jesus himself who never soared far off into remote abstractions but kept down on the ground of present conditions and duties.

The lessons of this Quarter pick out a few points in this application of the gospel and make them conspicuous.

The list of topics shows how many-sided these social implications and applications of the gospel are, meeting almost every question and problem of our modern world.

They deal with our debts to one another, the duty of keeping the self fit for the sake of others, useful work as a Christian duty, the Christian view of recreation, respect for rightful authority, world peace through mutual understanding, living with people of other races, the higher patriotism, the Christian home in our modern world, helping neighbors in need, the Christian spirit in industry, the child in a Christian world, and fellowship through worship. These cover the main points and problems of our modern world which may seem to us so different from that ancient world and yet in its essential life and laws is the same.

The Bible is a wonderful book in that it always seems to be ahead of us.

When we move forward and may think we have outgrown all the wisdom of the past we find it already there, waiting to give us light and guidance.

We do not yet know this book and are therefore often dim-eyed if not blind to the modernness of its principles and spirit. We may wonder at the blindness of the Jews to their own book and yet be as blind ourselves to its undiscovered truths and unfathomed depths.

May we have our eyes opened as we study these lessons that we may behold wondrous things out of the Word. "The opening of thy words giveth light."

FOURTH QUARTER

SOME SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE

Aim: To guide the pupil into an understanding of Bible teaching on some social relationships with a view to the establishing of right habits and attitudes in dealing with others.

LESSON I—OCTOBER 6

Recognizing Our Debt to Others

Lesson: Nehemiah 4:15-23; Mark 12:28–34; Romans 15:1–7; Philippians 2:1–8; Colossians 3:12; 4:1; James 2:14–17.

Golden Text: Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Philippians 2:4.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 40:5–10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Do We Owe to Others.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Fulfilling our Obligation to Others.

Lesson Text: Mark 12:28–34; James 2:14–17

28 And one of the scribes came, and heard them questioning together, and knowing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the first of all?

29 Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.

31 The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32 And the scribe said unto him, Of a truth, Teacher, thou hast well said that he is one; and there is none other but he:

33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

14 What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food,

16 And one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit?

17 Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *Petty Points.*
2. *And Large Principles.*
3. *Not Far from the Kingdom.*
4. *A Pointed Question.*
5. *And a Practical Answer.*

Certain of the Pharisees and Herodians were sent to Jesus "that they might catch him in talk." No good can come from that kind of insincere and captious controversy. These doctors of divinity were great dialecticians who had carried the art of theological hairsplitting to its finest point. Their whole system of theology was largely a set of artificial distinctions and petty points over which they wrangled continuously.

Ingenious "cases of conscience" and cunning catch questions were their stock in trade.

On this occasion they sent some of their smartest men to Jesus with some of their craftiest questions on which they felt sure he would impale himself. Yet he always gave them fair answers and never resorted to mere verbal evasions and clever devices to meet their low cunning. He was so fully armed and finely poised that quick as a flash he could parry every thrust and show himself master of the situation.

His transparent truth was his triumph.

These dialectical combats between Jesus and the Jews are one of the marvels of the Gospel. They have on them the inimitable marks of truth and never could have been invented.

1. Petty Points

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence, they gathered themselves for another trial. They felt that they were losing ground, and that something decisive must be done. A lawyer now stepped forth as their representative with his test question: "What commandment is the first of all?"

The question is not without merit.

There is an order of importance and precedence among commandments, and it is well to be able to distinguish universal and permanent principles from local and temporary precepts. How much of the practical wisdom of life consists in being able to discriminate big things from little things?

Especially is it important in religion to distinguish substance from form, spirit from letter, the grain from the husk.

This is just what these learned doctors failed to do, and in their hands this question of the order and rank of the commandments became an empty and wearisome dispute over Sabbath keeping and washings and phylacteries and fringes.

Scripture study that so misses great principles and seizes on petty points, religion that degenerates into such miserable disputing, is as offensive to right reason as it is useless in life.

This question was further vitiated by the sinister motive that prompted it. The lawyer was tempting Jesus, trying to puzzle and ensnare him, bent on gaining a personal victory rather than on discovering the truth.

2. And Large Principles

The question had been prepared, but the answer was unpremeditated, and it is marvelous in its simplicity, breadth, completeness and conclusiveness. Jesus drew his answer out of the Scriptures (Deut. 6:4–5), and simply quoted the "Shema" (Hebrew for Hear, the first word of the quotation) which every devout Jew recited twice a day: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Love is a comprehensive state of soul, gathering up into itself all the affections of the heart, the intelligence of the mind, and the energies of the will; and the highest object of this love, worthiest of all its warmth and wealth of feeling and splendor of intellect and energies of will, is the Lord our God.

This commandment is self-evidently great, overshadowing all others in importance, more urgent in its obligation and richer in its fruits. And it is the first commandment, for we must be right with God before we can be right with anything else.

"The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19:18).

This second commandment is the complement and logical completion of the first.

Love to God immediately expresses itself in love to men, as the sun leaps into light, and thus the whole circle of being is flooded and irradiated with this golden splendor. If we love God we must love men, too, for men are the children of God and are our brethren. This was Jesus' answer to the question, Which is the first commandment of all?

How he lifted it up out of the small casuistry and senseless quibbles of the Pharisees into universal principles and splendid usefulness!

Jesus always looked straight and clear into the heart of reality and saw things in their right proportions. The great commandment loomed up before his vision as a majestic mountain, while all these Pharisaic polemics lay as dust under his feet.

And yet Jesus did not invent this commandment, or give it its first utterance: he simply quoted out of the Jews' own Scripture a law that was universal and as old as human life.

The Pharisees knew the commandment and repeated it every day, yet they were blind to its superlative significance and splendor.

Are there not great laws and beautiful truths in the Bible which we fail adequately to perceive and appreciate and apply?

This commandment includes within its comprehensive sweep all the social teachings and applications of the gospel. Properly applied it will solve all our social problems of capital and labor, profits and wages, and of government and national and international affairs and make the world Christian.

3. Not Far from the Kingdom

The scribe himself set the seal of his approval on the answer of Jesus as true and good, repeating its points and making it his own.

In general the answers and all the teachings of Jesus were so self-evidently true and good that his hearers could hardly ever

reject them but felt forced to acknowledge their truth. And they bear this self-evidencing aspect to this day.

The teachings of Jesus usually appeal to the moral intuitions written on our hearts, and as we read his words we cannot help exclaiming, "Teacher, thou hast well said."

Jesus saw that the scribe answered discreetly and said unto him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." The scribe was not far from the kingdom in his intellectual belief in these fundamental things and in the fair spirit in which he received the answer of Jesus. Though he came to tempt Jesus, yet he seems to have been captured by the transparent truthfulness of the Nazarene and fell under the charm of his personality.

There are conditions of mind and heart that bring us near the kingdom.

What we believe has a powerful influence in determining our relations to God, and a general acceptance of Christian faith puts one near the kingdom in this respect. So also does a sympathetic spirit towards truth and duty and Christ and God bring one near the kingdom.

This is the condition of entering any kingdom, such as science or art, and especially is it necessary in entering the kingdom of God.

Yet this scribe, while near, was not in the kingdom, and the difference between near and yet not in may be the whole difference between life and death. One may come near to passing an examination for admission to a school or to the army, and yet, failing in one point, be shut out. A ship may almost reach the harbor of its destination and yet go down within sight of shore and home.

So one may be near the kingdom of God in many respects and yet be outside and finally be lost. It is not the condition of being far or near that saves one, but only the condition of being in.

The answer of Jesus effectively silenced the carping Scribes and Jesus warned his hearers against their self-seeking spirit.

4. A Pointed Question

We pass in our lesson from the active evangelist Mark to the practical James and see the social gospel pointedly applied. The argument starts out with a sharp question: "What doth it profit, my brethren,

if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?"

Profit is a large word in Jewish speech and this question is a keen thrust that every Jew could feel.

James reduces the matter of faith without works to business terms and wants to know what use or good there is in such faith. If there is no profit in it, it stands condemned, the Jews themselves being judges.

Can faith save? This seems to run counter to the general teaching of Scripture and especially to conflict with Paul's central doctrine of justification by faith.

But the two apostles were treating the matter from different points of view and were addressing different audiences.

Paul was a philosophical preacher working out the logical principles of the gospel, and James was a practical pastor addressing the needs of his people. The one was writing to those who had too little faith and needed to be indoctrinated in this primary principle of Christianity, and the other was writing to those that had too much faith of a certain kind and needed to be warned against it.

The Jews had that kind of intellectual faith which consists in constructing a creed and affirming it and contending for it. The Pharisees had carried this faith to its logical extreme and were the most rigid sticklers and furious fighters for orthodoxy the world has ever seen.

Such a faith is a matter of mind and may never change the heart and work itself out in the life.

It may coexist with the hollowest hypocrisy and with cold-blooded selfishness and even with malignant wickedness; outwardly white as a sepulcher, but inwardly full of dead men's bones.

5. And a Practical Answer

James now gives to his pointed question a practical answer. He wants to know if simply saying to a naked and hungry brother or sister, Be ye warmed and filled, without giving any clothing and food, will do any good. Will mere words make warm and mere names hide nakedness? He leaves the question unanswered because it answers itself.

The will to do good avails nothing until it flows out into work.

Inner faith is a practical force only when it shapes itself into outer fact. Paper schemes and charitable professions will not feed and clothe the world: only productive processes will do this.

"Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself." Mere saying without doing, profession without practice, is as useless in a church as in a factory or on a farm.

Of what use is the church if its creed is not converted into character and conduct?

The creed may be correct, the church may be prosperous and fashionable, the preaching may be eloquent, the church service may be beautiful, but if the faith there professed never gets into the hearts and home and business, never lifts a soul out of sin and selfishness into purity and peace, what good is it?

It is an impertinence and offense to God and to men.

James proceeds to show the true relation of faith and works. One having living faith can say to one having dead faith, "Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will shew thee my faith."

"Shew me thy faith apart from thy works" is a challenge; the thing cannot be done.

How can light show itself except by becoming visible, or a fountain prove that it has water if it sends forth no gushing stream?

On the other hand, the declaration, "I by my works will shew thee my faith" contains the true relation of faith and works. Faith shows itself by and through works. Faith shows itself in works as light shows itself in lightning flash or in all the splendor the sun spills over the earth; as life shows itself in leaf and blossom; as the musician shows us his skill in beautiful harmonies, and the painter and poet their art in glowing canvas and musical lines.

The familiar illustration of faith and works by the two oars of a boat, either of which alone only turns the boat around and only the two pulling together drive it forward illustrates the necessity of both faith and works, but it does not illustrate their mutual relation.

They are not two independent factors, but are related as seed and fruit, cause and effect.

Faith is the cause of works and works are the fruit of faith. Both growing together work the gospel out into its full application in our social life and in all the problems of our world.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What are some marks by which we can discriminate petty points from general principles?
2. Why are many willing to remain near the kingdom without coming in?
3. What is faith? and what are "works"?
4. Are we still disposed to escape duties by asking controversial questions?
5. What obligations do we owe to others?

LESSON II—OCTOBER 13

Keeping Fit for the Sake of Others (A Temperance Lesson)

Lesson: Daniel 1:8–20; I Corinthians 9:19–27; I Timothy 4:7–12; II Timothy 2:1–5.

Golden Text: Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own, for ye were bought with a price; glorify God therefore, in your body. I Corinthians 6:19–20.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 66:1–4, 16–20.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Self-control for the Common Good.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Temperance Essential to the Highest Usefulness.

Lesson Text: Daniel 1:8–20

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

9 Now God made Daniel to find kindness and compassion in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs.

10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your food and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse looking than the youths that are of your own age? so would ye endanger my head with the king.

11 Then said Daniel to the steward whom the prince of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the youths that eat of the king's dainties; and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he hearkened unto them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh, than all the youths that did eat of the king's dainties.

16 So the steward took away their dainties, and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse.

17 Now as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

18 And at the end of the days which the king had appointed for bringing them in, the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

20 And in every matter of wisdom and understanding, concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his realm.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *A Strong Purpose.*
2. *A Polite Proposal and a Perplexed Steward.*
3. *Proving the Proposal.*
4. *The Result.*
5. *The King's Examination.*

The king of Babylon gave directions to one of his ministers or stewards that "he should bring in certain of the children of Israel, even of the seed royal and of the nobles; youths in whom was no blemish, but well-favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and endued with knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability to stand in the king's palace: and that he should teach them the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans."

Four Hebrew boys were selected and sent to the royal school under the tutorage of the king's officer.

It was the policy of these ancient kings to select youths from among their subject peoples and train them for the public service, very much as our government selects young men and sends them to West Point and Annapolis.

Daniel and his three companions were chosen for this privilege and, in effect, they were sent to college.

1. A Strong Purpose

These young men ran into a serious temptation as soon as they found themselves in the royal school.

A change of environment frequently is attended with new temptations, and this is especially true with young people in college.

The Hebrew boys would be fed with food supplied from the royal larder and this involved eating meat and drinking wine that would be insanitary or ceremonially unclean according to Jewish standards and requirements.

The Jews were very particular about their food and had numerous rules regulating their diet.

Some of these were based on sanitary grounds and others on religious scruples. In general they would not use food that they knew or suspected had been devoted to the worship of a heathen god, for they considered that this involved them in guilty complicity with such worship. This gave the Jews great trouble as they came in contact with heathen people and customs, and it was still a burning question in the time of Paul and he discusses it more than once (Romans 14:13–23; I Cor. 8:1–13).

Even to this day this question is a troublesome one among orthodox Jews who ordinarily will not buy meat in a public market unless they know that it has conformed to Jewish requirement.

What did Daniel do about this matter?

He "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank." He did not refuse the wine on the ground of total abstinence as a temperance doctrine and practice, but on the religious ground.

Nevertheless, we may have our own reason, as he had his, for rejecting the use of wine and of highly-spiced foods.

If we find alcoholic beverages are injurious to us and a danger to others we are quite justified in declining their use and in resorting to legal means to prohibit their sale and use.

Daniel "purposed in his heart" that he would not do this thing, and in this purpose lay his victory.

All deeds spring from such purposes, and the stronger the purpose the surer its success.

The strength of one's will is the measure of the strength of his whole personality, and great men are always men of strong will.

Young people should exercise and cultivate this mastery of the will over themselves and then they can master their circumstances.

2. A Polite Proposal and a Perplexed Steward

Daniel sought a way out of his difficulty and "requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." He went about the matter in a reasonable and gracious way, not defying the steward and aggravating and insulting him with a blunt and gruff

refusal. He put his proposal in the form of a request and thus made it easy for the steward to find a way of granting it.

There are wrong ways of doing right things, and the cause of temperance has not infrequently been handicapped and hindered with the extreme charges and violent language used by its advocates.

The old-time "temperance orator" seemed to think it was all right to say anything, however baseless and abusive, that he thought would help his cause. We have learned better, and in all our arguments and advocacy of good causes we should seek to be fair and reasonable and speak the truth in love.

Nevertheless Daniel in spite of his courtesy put the steward in a hard place. In fact the steward explained that if he followed Daniel's plan he would be in danger of losing his head, and this seemed a heavy price to pay for granting such a request. The danger attending Daniel's proposal was that these Hebrew boys would look the worse if they did not use the king's food, growing thin in flesh and thereby exciting the king's suspicion. "So would ye endanger my head with the king." The prospect seemed bad, and what could be done about it?

In dealing with others and proposing courses for them to follow, we ought always to consider the consequences for them: will our plan work out well for them or only for us? We are much inclined to impose our will on others when what we have in view, either consciously or unconsciously, is not so much their good as our own.

We ought always to consider the other end of any proposal of ours, whether it is a bargain we are driving, a contract we are entering into, a rule we are imposing, or a suggestion we are making.

Every act of ours reacts on others, and it can either hurt or help them.

3. Proving the Proposal

Daniel met this suggestion of the steward with a fair proposal: "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenances of the youths that eat of the king's dainties; and as thou seest, deal with thy servants."

To this test must all things come: results.

By their fruits ye shall know them. This is the pragmatic philosophy and test of our day, and it is a good basis on which to judge principles and policies.

Daniel did not put his objection on the religious ground, though this was in the background, for this would not appeal to the steward but would rather offend him, but on the ground of health and growth.

Highly-spiced food is generally unhealthful and injurious, and plain food is best.

This is a general fact of experience that is borne out in many homes of wealth and high living and in every health resort and sanitarium where those afflicted with gout and a whole flock of diseases that feed on rich food, gather.

Of course wine and all intoxicating beverages are the greatest offenders at this point and aggravate almost all ailments and breed a numerous brood of their own.

On the other hand, temperance in the use of all food and abstinence from the use of intoxicants are means of health and happiness, and a long experience proves this.

Just now we are engaged in a national experiment on this question, and by its results we must stand.

We are not afraid of the outcome.

The doctrine and duty of total abstinence was not born yesterday, nor was the Eighteenth Amendment put over on us suddenly and secretly "while the boys were across the sea," but this law was the outcome of agitation and education running through more than a century. Its results are open to investigation and statistical tabulation, and while the proof of its working is not as satisfactory as it ought to be and will be, yet it is so encouraging that the American people are standing and will stand by it.

The "countenances" of many men and especially of many children are not "worse looking," but better, for they are eating more and better food, and this is promoting individual and national welfare.

4. The Result

How did the result of Daniel's proposal come out with these Hebrew boys? "And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh, than all the youths that did eat of the king's dainties."

Comparison is a recognized scientific method of determining and measuring the results of any principle and process. Compare those instances that comply with the principle under trial with those that do not, and add up the results: by that result must the principle stand or fall.

We can apply this at many points to the use of intoxicating beverages.

Go with it into the colleges and compare the academic standing of students that are temperate in their food and total abstainers from intoxicants and studious in their studies with those that are given to late hours and dissipation, and the college records will show which class are making good and which are falling behind and must be called to account before the faculty.

Apply the same test to families.

Compare the record of a family that lives plainly and practices total abstinence with one that lives on highly-seasoned foods and has wine and stronger drinks on the sideboard: the results are favorable to the first class of families, and the history of families of the second class often presents a sad if not tragic record.

And apply the same test to nations.

A people that soak themsleves with alcohol are poisoning and rotting their very blood and bones and will decline and totter to their fall.

A few years ago some German physiologists made delicate tests of the effects of alcohol in the human system, and the results showed that even a small amount acted as a poison that lowered efficiency. It is true that statistics are occasionally produced and paraded that are claimed to show different results, but they are not in accordance with the tables of life insurance companies and especially with the general experience of men.

"Their countenances appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh,

than all the youths that did eat of the king's dainties," and this ancient result still stands true in the light of our modern experience.

Let our youth heed it and be wis

5. The King's Examination

Every school, whether in our college halls or in the great school of the world, has examination and graduation days, and so was it in this royal school of the king of Babylon.

He was an efficient king who did not trust results to his officers, but looked into them for himself.

He was present on examination day when these four Hebrew boys along with Babylonian boys were brought before him for examination. The result must have been an astonishment to the royal examiner.

"Now as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom." At this point the king took a hand in the examination himself to see that it was not all "crammed" and "set up." "And in every matter of wisdom and understanding, concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his realm."

It would be well if the parents of our children and youth took as close personal interest in their education. Very generally we now commit our children to schools and professors and do not know what these are teaching, or how well our children and youth are attending to their studies.

"Ten times better!" That was the record of these Hebrew boys who stood by their fathers' religious faith and practices and refused dainties and wine for plain food.

And as they stood high in school, so did they afterwards in the greater school of the empire in which Daniel rose to the highest position and honor.

All this was rooted back in that day when Daniel "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself."

Let our young people make such noble purposes in their hearts and they, too, will stand well in the day of examination in school and in all the testings and trials of life.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give instances of strong purposes formed by great men.
2. What was the teaching of Paul as to meat and drink?
3. Tell what you know about the working of prohibition?
4. Are our young people drinking more or less under this law?
5. Is our American prohibition having any influence abroad?

LESSON III—OCTOBER 20

Useful Work a Christian Duty

Lesson: Genesis 2:15; Exodus 20:9; Nehemiah 6:3; John 5:17; 9:4; Acts 20:33–35; II Thessalonians 3:6-12; Ephesians 4:28.

Golden Text: If any will not work, neither let him eat. II Thessalonians 3:10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Honest Work Essential to Success.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Gambling Spirit Hurtful to Business and Morals.

Lesson Text: Genesis 2:15; Exodus 20:9; Nehemiah 6:3; John 5:17; 9:4; Acts 20:33–35; II Thessalonians 3:6–12; Ephesians 4:28

15 And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

9 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work.

3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work.

4 We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

33 I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

34 Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35 In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us; for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8 Neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labor and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you:

9 Not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you, that ye should imitate us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let them eat.

11 For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Work a Primary Institution.*
2. *The Father Works.*
3. *The Work of Jesus.*
4. *Paul's Preaching and Practice.*
5. *General Reasons for Work.*

The Bible is a very practical book and comes down into and deals with the daily duties and drudgeries of life.

Work is a universal fact in the world and fills a large part of thought and action. It must be done, or things could not go on and all would perish.

Our lesson is on useful work a Christian duty, and it is important to put the emphasis on the word *useful.*

There is a vast amount of work that is not useful. Much of this kind of work is simply unnecessary and does not contribute to the real welfare of the world. It is wasteful of capital and labor and thereby draws off production from useful work.

Other work is not only unnecessary and wasteful, but it is positively harmful and destructive of human welfare; it may be murderous and wicked. The manufacture of intoxicating beverages in our country was an enormous business, employing immense numbers of men and consuming huge quantities of grain and other materials, but it was all waste and loss and productive of poverty and vice and misery, and therefore we stopped it.

Every kind of work should be subjected to this test: is it useful?

Does it produce genuine goods that contribute to human welfare? Or, does it, instead of producing wealth, to use Ruskin's word produce "illth"? This test rules out some lines of activity, such as gambling. In fact, it may not be easy to draw the line between what is and what is not useful work but is wasteful and injurious, and in choosing one's business this point should be considered and made decisive.

1. Work a Primary Institution

Our lesson passages are gathered from different parts of the Bible and are intended to illustrate different aspects of the subject.

These selections begin at the beginning and show us that work is a primary institution in the very plan and creation of the world.

It is not a mere human invention or incident in our world, but is laid down in its foundation and wrought into its whole structure.

God took the first man and put him in a garden to dress and keep it. The garden was full of growing things and it took constant cultivation and care to keep them growing in an orderly and fruitful way.

The whole earth is such a garden or field that must be ploughed and sown with seed and reaped, or it would run wild into a wilderness and jungle.

So from the beginning man had to cultivate the earth in order to live off it, and he must do so still.

This is the basis of our whole system of agriculture which is the fundamental industry.

Primitive men lived on wild growing things and on this basis they never could rise to any high level of life. But with the art of cultivation they have diversified and multiplied the fruits of the earth into all the varieties and abundance of food that we now enjoy and that are so large a factor in our farming and trade and international commerce.

This cultivated fruitfulness of the earth has also released large amounts of human labor and capital for all the manufacturing arts by which our material civilization has risen to its present high level.

But, it may be said, did not sin expel our first parents from this garden and curse the earth and cause it to bring forth thorns and thistles and turn human labor itself into sweat and wearisome toil?

Undoubtedly sin inserted its sting into human labor as into all things else.

It did not poison the ground, thorns and thistles had long been growing in it and are a part of its beneficent life, but it threw man out of harmony with his environment and thereby made his labor a burden. Sin has also entered into our industrial relations and labor problems and thereby disarranged and jangled them.

But labor itself is not a curse but a means of life, and in so far as we eliminate from it human selfishness and sin we free it from its burdens and bitterness and turn it into life and liberty and joy.

2. The Father Works

Does God himself work? Would we not think that he that has sovereign power and can do all things by his will would be freed from any necessity for work and would live a life of pure ease and enjoyment?

But would such a life be one of pure ease and enjoyment even in God?

We are much inclined to associate work with a harsh restriction upon our life and veritable drudgery and slavery, and we picture a life of idleness as one of pure liberty such as the birds enjoy, not seeing that the birds also are busy and must seek their food and escape storm and flood. The painters have usually pictured God as reclining on gorgeous clouds, in luxurious ease, far removed from any work.

But this is a false view of God and does him no credit and renders him no honor.

Jesus had a better view of God and hit the truth when he said, "My father worketh hitherto."

God is the great Worker.

He planned the heavens and struck out all the stars and systems and sent them spinning along calculated orbits in exact and beautiful harmony. He put this planet in his shop and worked at it millions of years while he was rounding it into shape and building its continents and pushing up its mountain peaks and digging its ocean beds and planting it and breathing upon it and causing it to blossom and bear all its fruits and grains.

And still is he working at it or working "hitherto" up to this very moment, feeding the fires of the sun and stars and keeping the planet in its orbit and nursing every root and bud and leaf and bathing the whole earth in his warm breath and sustaining presence and guiding providence. Were God to cease working and withdraw his hand the whole vast system of things would collapse into chaos and vanish into nothingness.

God is ever a busy God.

Nothing goes on without his care; no atom ever gets out of place, no dewdrop ever misses its appointed blade of grass, no star ever shoots a forbidden ray.

All things in his world are busy doing his will and carrying on his work.

There are no lazy oaks, no idle blades of grass. Not a tinge of moss on a rock or most infinitesimal molecule or electron but is fulfilling his will and carrying out some important part and mission in his world. We do no honor to God when we think of him as always resting and lying in the lap of luxurious ease and idleness.

Not so, God is at work from the beginning and hitherto, and if we would be like God and be worthy of his image we must be busy too, throwing our plans and wills and energies into useful lines of service.

3. The Work of Jesus

Jesus concludes his witness to the working of the Father with the affirmation, "and I work."

How that rounds out his statement to completeness and perfection!

How unworthy of his divine sonship and untrue to his mission if he had disowned any work on his own part and lapsed into a life of idleness and ease! But "I work," he said, and thereby put himself in the same company and service with his Father and set another seal on his right to be the Son of God.

Jesus was a worker during his whole earthly life.

As a child he was "about his Father's business," and grew in wisdom as he went to school and learned his lessons well as a good scholar. Then he entered his father's carpenter shop and became a skilled artisan, building houses for the people of the village or making plows and ox yokes for the neighboring farmers.

All this was a true part of his mission as the Saviour of the world, for work is a part of human salvation.

The gospel must help to save men from cold and hunger, or what good is it? Wherever the gospel goes, there human labor is most active and most fruitful in products, and this fact is one result of its teaching and spirit.

Jesus was no idler, no loafer and parasite in the world, no elegant gentleman with white linen and unsoiled hands, but a carpenter, a mechanic, a daily toiler who went to his work on time and staid by his bench until his day's work was done. He did not watch the clock and drop his tools at the first stroke of the hour of quitting. He did not hurry through or skimp his work, he left no loose joints or rough surfaces, no one had to come after him and do his work over again. No work ever left his shop that had to be brought back to be made right.

His reputation for honest work was unsurpassed and his work was in demand and commanded the best prices among his neighbors because it was of the best quality; it was serviceable and durable.

Are not such workers one of the great needs of the world today?

Is there not a general disposition to slip through our work with the slightest expenditure of exertion and care and get the highest wages for the least work? Are we not more intent on getting our pay than in giving our service? Are we bringing up our sons and daughters to think that work is beneath their dignity and social standing, and is not the lure of the white collar and a genteel position drawing many of our youth into clerkships and other such work rather than into the fields and factories where they could earn more and be more useful? We may verily believe that going to college has been the practical ruin of many a boy, for about all it did for him was to lead him to think that work is not for him and that the world now owes him an easier living.

"I believe," says Charles Kingsley, "that a man might be, as a tailor or as a carpenter, every inch of him a saint, a scholar, and a gentleman." A saint, a scholar, and a gentleman: these are the qualities that constitute a true man, and every man, whatever his station in life, can have them. Jesus was as truly a saint, a scholar and a gentleman while making plows and ox yokes in his carpenter shop in Nazareth as while preaching the sermon on the mount.

Instead of keeping up this everlasting cry of getting on in the world and teaching it to our children, by which is meant that young men

should get off the farms and out of the trades into professions and offices and that everybody should get rich or be discounted and disgraced as a failure, let us know that most of us must stay where we are and that in the humblest station we can develop the highest manhood and everyone of us be a saint, a scholar and a gentleman.

Our greatest teachers have preached this gospel of work.

"Sure good," says Ruskin, "is first in feeding people, then in dressing people, and lastly in rightly pleasing people with arts, or sciences, or in any other subject of thought." "The thistle that grows in thy path," says Carlyle, "dig it out, that a blade of grass, or a drop of nourishing milk, may grow there instead. The waste cotton shrub, gather its waste white down, spin it, weave it: that in place of idle litter there may be folded webs, and the naked skin of man be covered."

4. Paul's Preaching and Practice

Our lesson closes with two passages from Paul. If there ever was an intense worker, he was one of ceaseless activity amidst hardest toil and daring adventures and imminent perils.

For one thing, he earned his living with his own hands even when he was traveling and preaching the gospel. In common with all Jewish boys he had learned a trade and it stood him in good stead in his work as an apostle and preacher.

This gave him a practical education that mere books and college diplomas can never give. And it were well that our preachers should know some trade or art likewise.

This will practicalize their book learning and teach them how to manage men and affairs. Some preachers are pitiful creatures in their innocence and ignorance of the practical side of life and become objects of sympathy that is closely akin to contempt among their men. A trade also may make them more independent as a resource they can fall back upon if they are thrown or invited out of their pulpit. Paul's tent-making gave him standing among his people such as his theology never did.

Not less learning but more practicality is a good thing in a preacher, and a knowledge of a trade or art may give him this admirable qualification.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What are some marks of useful work?
2. Does God's work weary him?
3. Is Jesus still working?
4. Why do we dislike work?
5. How can we get interested in our work?

LESSON IV—OCTOBER 27

The Christian View of Recreation

Lesson: Jeremiah 31:12–13; Zechariah 8:5; Matthew 11:16–19; Mark 2:18–28; 6:30–32; John 2:1–11.

Golden Text: I came that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly. John 10:10.

Devotional Reading: Philippians 4:4–9.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Play Does for Us.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Recreation in Community Life.

Lesson Text: Mark 2:18–28

18 And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting: and they come and say unto him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the sons of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day.

21 No man seweth a piece of undressed cloth on an old garment: else that which should fill it up taketh from it, the new from the old, and a worse rent is made.

22 And no man putteth new wine into old wine-skins; else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth, and the skins: but *they put* new wine into fresh wine-skins.

23 And it came to pass, that he was going on the sabbath day through the grainfields; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears.

24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

25 And he said unto them, Did ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was hungry, he, and they that were with him?

26 How he entered into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the showbread, which it is not lawful to eat save for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him?

27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

28 So that the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Jesus at a Fashionable Dinner Party.*
2. *Feasting and Fasting.*
3. *New Wine in New Wine skins.*

4. Jesus Charged with Sabbath Breaking.
5. The Charge Answered.
6. The Sabbath Made for Man.

The question of amusements is as troublesome as it is important. We must have recreations or life deprived of its proper play and pleasure will work its revenge upon us, and reaction against a starved and stunted life will go to the opposite extreme.

Sometimes custom swings to one extreme and sometimes to the other, and the difficult problem is to strike the golden mean.

The question is largely modified by personal and local conditions, and only general principles can be illustrated. Jesus was confronted with this question of recreation and it gave him trouble.

But he solved it in his own original and bold way and we are safe in following his principles and spirit.

1. Jesus at a Fashionable Dinner Party

Jesus attended a fashionable dinner party.

This is at once a significant fact as bearing on our subject.

Jesus was not a recluse or an ascetic, standing aloof from the social life and joys of the world in tacit disapproval, but he shared in all human festivities, made wine at a wedding and sat with men at their feasts.

The man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief was also anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, the gladdest man that ever lived.

He touched all the shores and sounded all the deeps of the world and yet he kept himself unspotted. His boat was in the sea of the world, but the sea was not in his boat.

Yet even in this feast he had a religious end in view and was working out his mission.

He was burrowing down into these lower strata ("publicans and sinners") of society in order that he might put under them the lever of the gospel. He associated with the lower classes, not that they might drag him down, but that he might lift them up. He did not

come to slice the loaf of society horizontally and save the upper crust, but to slice it vertically and save every part of it. Jesus met these tax gatherers and disreputable people on natural human ground as a man among men in pleasant social intercourse, and thus he gained their good will and confidence. Thus Jesus was working out his mission whether he was in a place of business or in a place of pleasure; and this is one principle that should pervade and govern our recreations and pleasures: they should be in harmony with our religious faith and spirit and even be a means of carrying it on and imparting it to others.

2. Feasting and Fasting

At this time John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, and this feasting of Jesus gave them trouble. They came to Jesus with the question, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?"

The social customs of others often give offense to our consciences and we think they ought to conform to us.

Jesus answered, "Can the sons of the bridegroom fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day."

The point is that there are times when it is proper to feast, and other times when it is not proper.

Both feasting and fasting are outer expressions of inner feelings, and the outer expression and the inner feeling should fit each other. We cannot mourn while we are rejoicing, or rejoice while we are mourning, as we cannot cry and laugh at the same time.

The disciples of Jesus were enjoying his presence and were in no mood to fast; but the day would come when he would be taken away, and then his disciples would have reason enough to fast.

This involves an important principle in our recreations and pleasures. There is a fitting time for these things, and other times when they are out of place.

We would not want a doleful dirge at a wedding or a comic song at a funeral. Pleasures that may be proper at one time may be sadly out of place at another. Some things that may be innocent enough

at other places would be sacrilegious in the church; and many week-day activities and pleasures are inharmonious with the worshipful atmosphere of Sunday.

Things may be wrong, not because they are wicked, but because they are out of harmony with the time and place, unbeautiful and in bad taste.

3. New Wine in New Wine skins

Next in answer to the objection about fasting Jesus gave two parabolic sayings that contain a great principle. Unfulled cloth must not be used to patch old garments, for the shrinking new cloth will tear a rent in the old; and new wine must not be put in old wine skins, for the fermenting wine will burst the old brittle skins and both will be lost.

The application to the question in hand was that old customs may not fit into new occasions; fasting will not fit into an occasion of joy when feasting is the proper expression of the feelings of the hour.

However, the illustrations sweep far beyond the immediate application of the occasion and lay down a principle of general application.

The gospel refused to be put as a patch on the old Mosaic garment: it let the old garment perish and cut its own cloth into a new garment. It would not pour its new wine into the old and brittle wine skin of Judaism, but provided its own new wine skin into which it poured its fermenting and expanding wine.

Conservatism has an honored past, but it must not try to confine the new spirit of progress in its old containers of creed and polity, modes of teaching and applying its message.

Truth is ever growing and calling for larger expression better adapted to its day. The gospel is ever coming into broader fields with more splendid opportunities and must adopt new means and methods.

Jesus thus shook his kingdom loose from fossilized ecclesiasticism and let it out into the life and liberty of ever new growth and broader application.

4. Jesus Charged with Sabbath Breaking

Next we find Jesus charged with Sabbath breaking. How to observe the Sabbath with proper methods and in a right spirit was one of the chief points of controversy he had with the Pharisees, who were strict sabbatarians, and it is a point that still gives us trouble.

On this particular Sabbath Jesus and his disciples were passing through a grainfield. The paths and roads ran through the fenceless country and there was nothing unusual in their being there. The disciples were hungry and began to pull off the heads of wheat and, rubbing out the grains in their hands, to eat them. The act was lawful (Deut. 23:25) and would be innocent in any country and on any day.

But some Pharisees observed them and saw their chance. They pounced upon the act as unlawful on the Sabbath.

It was a very small point, but the controversial ecclesiastic can often see a mote when he cannot see a mountain.

The command to do no work had been spun out by the Pharisees into a thousand petty prohibitions. "Grass was not to be trodden, as being akin to harvest work. Shoes with nails were not to be worn, as the nails would be a 'burden,' and a 'burden' must not be carried. A tailor must not have his needle about him towards sunset on Friday, for fear the Sabbath should begin while he was yet carrying it."

These were the "traditions of the elders" with which the scribes "made void the word of God" (Matt. 15:6). These were the "heavy burdens and grievous to be borne" which "they lay on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger" (Matt. 23:4), for they resorted to all sorts of ingenious subterfuges to evade them.

This is what religion runs into when it keeps the letter and loses the spirit.

Such regulations made it impossible to keep the Sabbath and smothered the day as effectually as though it had been annulled.

No doubt our fathers went too far in this same direction of overlaying and constricting the day with their human rules and regulations until it became a burden to everybody and especially to children, who were oppressed with it and were glad when it was gone.

However, our danger now lies in swinging to the other extreme and relaxing the day into recreation and play and pleasure that threaten to destroy its religious uses.

We shall do this at our peril, and we need to conserve and guard this day as a day not only of rest and proper recreation, but of reverence and worship.

5. The Charge Answered

Jesus met the charge with a parallel case. He put himself on common ground with his critics where they had to agree with him.

The objection implied ignorance of their own Scriptures.

Had they not read of David, how when he was hungry he went into the tabernacle and ate the showbread, an act that was unlawful for any but the priests? If David on the ground of hunger could override the law of the tabernacle, could not the disciples of Jesus on the same ground pluck and eat grain on the Sabbath?

This argument enlisted David on the side of his disciples and the Pharisees were silenced, for they did not dare to question David.

The principle of the argument is that lower needs must give way to higher necessities.

Even admitting that plucking grain to satisfy hunger was a violation of the rest of the Sabbath, yet hunger is a higher necessity than rest and had to have the right of way.

A higher law may override a lower.

Gravitation must yield to chemical affinity, and chemical affinity to vital energy. Ceremonies must stand out of the way of humanities. When life is in danger, ceremony must stand aside. A fire may put an end to family worship, and sickness turn the Sabbath into a weary watching and working. No doubt there is a great evil in the land in the unnecessary work that is done on the Sabbath, and we need to be stricter and not more lax in keeping the day, but in determining its necessities and its freedom we must be governed by broad humanities.

6. The Sabbath Made for Man

Jesus concluded and clinched his argument with the basal principle of the Sabbath: "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath."

This lifts the day to the rank of a primary need of humanity. It is not a local and temporary arrangement, but a universal and perpetual institution.

It fits into human needs, it matches man as the air fills his lungs and the light fits into his eyes.

A fundamental necessity of life is rest.

No machine can stand uninterrupted work; even the steel locomotive must have periodic rest, much more must man. God has built rest into the solar system in the night that soothes us to sleep.

But long and wide experience has shown that the nightly rest is not enough: there is further need which is exactly met by the weekly Sabbath.

It covers and fits the whole man, physical, mental and spiritual. The day was made to match these faculties and needs and it fills them full.

But man was not made for the Sabbath. Man is the end and the Sabbath is the means; man is greater than the Sabbath and all its ministries must be subordinated to his nature and needs.

The coat must be cut to fit the man, not the man cut to fit the coat. The Pharisees wanted the Sabbath to be kept though men should be starved; and any arrangement that makes the observance of the day according to particular methods more important than the welfare of men repeats their mistake.

This is a general principle that applies to all our recreations and pleasures: are they adapted to us so as to promote our total good, or are we adapting ourselves to them so as to carry them on and make them profitable? Have our amusements become a commercialized business which are not adapted to our welfare but are rather using us as means to their ends? This principle cuts deep and would decide many troublesome points for us when properly applied.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What are some of the chief dangers in our present amusements?
2. Are we going pleasure mad?
3. What does play do for us?
4. What are some good community recreations?

LESSON V—NOVEMBER 3 (WORLD'S TEMPERANCE SUNDAY)

Respect for Rightful Authority

Lesson: Mark 12:13–17; Romans 13:1–14; I Peter 2:13–16.

Golden Text: Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers. Romans 13:1.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 5:13–20.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Obeying the Law.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Making Effective the Will of the Community.

Lesson Text: Mark 12:13–17; Romans 13:1–7; I Peter 2:13–16

13 And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, that they might catch him in talk.

14 And when they were come, they say unto him, Teacher, we know that thou art true, and carest not for any one; for thou regardest not the person of men, but of a truth teachest the way of God: Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?

15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocricy, said unto them, Why make ye trial of me? bring me a denarius, that I may see it.

16 And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar's.

17 And Jesus said unto them, Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's. And they marveled greatly at him.

1 Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the *powers* that be are ordained of God.

2 Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment.

3 For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same:

4 For he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil.

5 Wherefore *ye* must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

6 For for this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing.

7 Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due;* custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

13 Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme;

14 Or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that by welldoing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

16 As free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *Pharisees and Herodians.*
2. *A Clever Catch Question.*
3. *A Masterly Answer*
4. *Powers Ordained of God.*
5. *A Good Example.*

The word law is related to the word laid and indicates something that is laid down and settled, as a foundation. Laws are the rules of our world that are fixed and must be followed, or anarchy would reign.

They are the foundation and framework of our civil order and on wise laws and the enforcement of them and obedience to them our whole welfare depends.

They are the subject of endless problems and debates and difficulties and engross a considerable part of our time. They grip and enmesh us all and each and it is of the first importance that we understand them and live by them.

The Bible itself is a book of laws, physical, political, moral and spiritual, so that the Jews commonly called it "the law of the Lord."

The passages in our lesson throw some light upon this fundamental subject.

1. Pharisees and Herodians

"And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, that they might catch him in talk." These men were afraid to go themselves, but they sent others; they got others to do their mean work, while they kept themselves in the background.

This sneaking way of attacking others is still practiced among us, even in the church.

Many a man, or woman, too cowardly to come out in the open with charges, will yet find a way of sending some one else to start rumors and sow suspicion and breed trouble.

Pharisees and Herodians were bitter enemies, as one party opposed

and the other supported the Roman rule, but they were made friends together in their common opposition to Jesus on this day.

Religion, like politics, often make strange bed-fellows.

Men will sink their lesser differences when they can join in a greater common cause.

These Pharisees and Herodians sent "their disciples" (Matt. 25:16) "that they might catch him in talk." Luke describes these emissaries still more definitely as "spies which feigned themselves to be righteous, that they might take hold of his speech." They pretended to be humble and sincere souls in search of light in their honest perplexity, whereas they were masked enemies and conspirators seeking to do Jesus harm.

The value of a question very largely depends on the motive and spirit of the questioner.

A sincere question indicates an honest state of mind that is itself a condition and means of receiving truth; upon such a soul the light is sure to dawn. But an insincere captious question, that is intended only to catch another in a trap or to embrangle the subject in controversy, is a state of darkness that will shut out the truth.

In nothing else is sincerity of motive so important as in religion. If we ask religious questions to catch others we shall get caught ourselves.

2. A Clever Catch Question

"Teacher," they said, "we know that thou art true, and carest not for anyone; for thou regardest not the person of men, but of a truth teachest the way of God."

Could any introductory address be more laudatory and perfect?

They certify to his truth, that he knows the truth and speaks only the truth, so that in him there is no suspicion or shadow of falsity.

To his truth they also add the great virtue of courage, for he cares not for any one or for any consequences, but will speak the truth in the face of Cæsar himself.

They also bear witness to his fearless impartiality, as he will not regard the person of men and can be depended on to teach the way of God.

All this characterization was true, fitting Jesus to the letter.

Of course these enemies did not really believe a word of all this, but some of the truest and finest things ever said of Jesus have been uttered by his enemies who spoke better than they knew. They thought that by thus flattering him they would lull him into a state of self-satisfaction in which he would be thrown off his guard and easily fall into their snare.

This art has not been lost, and Christ is often still spoken of in a most flattering way by those who reject him and wound him to the heart.

They were now ready with their question. "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?"

This question seemed perfectly legitimate and innocent of any sinister purpose, and yet it was a cunning trap, and they felt sure it would catch Jesus.

It grew, of course, out of the political situation. Rome ruled Judea with a hard hand and ruthlessly put down any restlessness and rebellion in blood. The Jews, a proud and patriotic people who believed themselves a chosen nation with the right to rule over all the world, were chafing under this yoke and at times breaking into rebellion against it.

So it seemed certain that Jesus would impale himself on one or the other horn of this question, whichever way he answered it. If he said the Jews should not pay the Roman taxes he would be guilty of treason and bring down the Roman hand upon him. If he said the Jews should pay them he would infuriate the Jews and be branded as a traitor to his country. "Shall we give, or shall we not give?"

They demanded: yes or no! and supposed he was trapped and silenced.

But some questions cannot be answered by a simple yes or no.

3. A Masterly Answer

Jesus overlooked their demand for such an answer and quietly called for a Roman penny. "And they brought it," little thinking that they were bringing the very witness that would refute and silence them.

" Whose image and superscription? " he asked. And they could not do otherwise than answer, " Cæsar's." Then said Jesus, " Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." "And they marvelled greatly at him."

Well might they marvel. Their question was frankly and fully answered Jesus was freed from all offense to either Roman or Jew, and they themselves were caught in their own net.

By the fact of their using Cæsar's coin they so far acknowledged Cæsar's government. They accepted the benefits of Roman order, protection and safety, Roman roads and Roman rights: was it not just that they should pay for these things?

This was the meaning of the tribute or taxes they were assessed and paid, and they themselves admitted the justice of such taxes by the very coin they used.

This principle held good even though the Roman power was a usurpation which they had a right to overthrow if they could. The Roman rule was the de facto government, and as such should be obeyed.

On the other hand, God also had rights that should be fulfilled.

Their own souls were stamped with the divine image and bore witness to his right to reign over them. They should therefore render unto him the faith and service that were his due.

Thus duty to man and duty to God were both recognized and enforced by this marvelous answer of Jesus.

These two duties are still binding upon us, however much the circumstances connected with them have changed their form.

We owe our government tribute or taxes and obedience and respect; and we also owe the same duties unto God.

These two sets of duties do not conflict but combine into one spirit and service.

These disciples of the Pharisees and Herodians now retired from the controversy: they had had enough. Next the Sadducees came with another question that was fearfully and wonderfully made, and they also went back in confusion. Jesus was always too much for these controversialists and gave them more than they were looking for.

And yet his answers were never mere clever devices but were frank and fair and simply told the truth.

4. Powers Ordained of God

Paul lived under the same Roman rule as did the Pharisees and Herodians, and yet he was loyal to it in accordance with the teaching and practice of Jesus.

Jesus paid the Roman tax himself and thereby sanctioned this mode of supporting government.

Paul was a lawyer and of course he appreciated the necessity and importance of law and always obeyed it and more than once appealed to it. As minister and a missionary he did not give up his civil rights and right to protection.

He frequently in his letters deals with the matter of law and obedience and good citizenship and they are almost a manual of civic duties.

A fundamental fact that he lays down in the passage in our lesson is that "the powers that be are ordained of God." He was writing to the Romans and so he was preaching loyalty in the very seat and center of Roman government. It was a despotic and corrupt government beyond anything we know, but none the less Paul recognized in it the ordinance of God.

This problem of whether a government is legitimate or not, that convulses so many other nations, happily never troubles us and we can give our undivided loyalty to our government irrespective of the party in power.

Civil government is ordained of God along with all other laws, physical and moral and spiritual, for all law has its seat in his bosom and is the expression of his wisdom and will.

Civil law, therefore, is God's will for us and should receive the same respect and obedience as other divinely ordained law. This fact does not annul our right and duty to seek the modification or abrogation of a law which we think is unwise or unjust, but in the meantime we should give it our support and obedience.

Loyalty to the government means patriotism and should be backed up with all that patriotism enjoins and implies.

Patriotism, however, is not a mere sentiment that is to express and expend itself on certain days and acts. It does not consist simply in making a noise and unfurling flags on the Fourth of July or in passing political resolutions in conventions or indulging in loud vociferations of our devotion to our country.

Especially it does not consist in boasting of our superiority over other countries together with irritating if not disparaging and insulting references to them. Such is the cheap patriotism of demagogues and it does harm in our international relations and discloses a provincial and shallow and conceited sense of what patriotism is and should receive our disapproval and contempt.

Patriotism is a practical thing that comes down into our daily life and expresses itself in concrete ways.

Paul proceeds to indicate some of these. It calls for respect to our elected officials, from constables up to governors and congressmen and the President. The habit of speaking disrespectfully and contemptuously of these officials is a form of disloyalty and is bad citizenship.

It expressly means the payment of our taxes.

The disposition to deride and complain at and evade these is another form of poor citizenship. " Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."

This admonition of Paul to his readers as to their civil duties is still a good summary of what we owe to the powers that be.

5. A Good Example

Peter did not always agree with Paul, but he agrees with him on this practical point of obedience to civil law. One point we may select in his passage: " For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God. '

Again he resolves civil duties into the will of God and enjoins his readers to set an example of " well-doing."

This means that we must consider the influence of our example in our political life as in all other relations.

We cannot, then, presume to set aside or disregard any law without endangering all law and setting up our example as a center and source of infection spreading the spirit of lawlessness through the whole body politic.

This means we should not violate any law, even though we do not approve of it, but give it our support and by this example of "well-doing" help to promote the spirit of loyalty to all law.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Do we have a good system of government?
2. How should we seek to improve it?
3. Is it a duty to vote?
4. Why are taxes unpopular?
5. Is lawlessness an American trait and how can we cure it?

LESSON VI—NOVEMBER 10

World Peace Through Mutual Understanding

Lesson: Isaiah 2:2–4; 11:6–10; 19:23–35; Acts 17:22–28; Ephesians 4:4–6, 13–19; John 4:20–21.

Golden Text: They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea. Isaiah 11:9.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 98:1–9.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Working for World Peace.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Our Share in Promoting International Understanding.

Lesson Text: Isaiah 2:2–4; Acts 17:22–28; John 4:20–21

2 And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

3 And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.

4 And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

22 Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious.

23 For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you.

24 The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25 Neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

26 And he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us:

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said.

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *On the Top of the Mountains.*
2. *A Prophetic Picture of Universal Peace.*
3. *An Altar to an Unknown God.*
4. *The True God Proclaimed.*
5. *God's Universal Fatherhood and Providence.*
6. *A Sectarian Question Grandly Answered.*

Peace through mutual understanding: not through rivalry and competition and strife and war: that is the Christian ideal. The world has tried the old ways of mutual friction and incrimination and war long enough: centuries have been given to these fruitless and futile ways.

We must at least reduce the world to a basis of law and conduct its international relations according to principles of justice and righteousness as interpreted in an international court.

Some progress has been and is being made in this direction and it will make more rapid progress and reach its goal as Christian teaching and spirit spread and pervade all peoples and countries.

1. On the Top of the Mountains

Our lesson opens with a passage from Isaiah and shows us one of his glowing visions of the future. "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."

Here we have the magnificent breadth and universality of the prophet's outlook upon the world.

He was no parochial teacher or narrow racial prophet with his vision confined within the borders of his own little land, a patriot to whom his country was bigger than all the rest of the world, but standing on the hill top of Jerusalem he swept his vision around the horizon and extended it until it included "all nations."

This was all the more remarkable when we consider that he lived in a time when no other religion or prophet had acquired any such breadth and sweep of vision, but every other religion was then local and worshiped a tribal deity. But here we see a Jew, living in a little

country and a member of a race with an intense self-consciousness and the narrowest and most inveterate national prejudices, overleaping all boundaries of native land and race and tradition and borne off on the wings of a worldwide flight of imagination and faith.

It is a small man that cannot see beyond the borders of his own country, a petty-minded patriotism, which has caused much mischief in the world, which thinks the way to love one's own country is to disparage if not tc hate other countries.

The Christian is a citizen of the world, and while he rightly loves his own country with peculiar affection, he yet has universal sympathies and recognizes the broader ties of common blood that bind all men into one brotherhood.

The kingdom of God is the fulfillment of this ideal of the Hebrew prophet, and we are now living in the day of its widening growth as it spreads over the world and plants its outposts on every shore.

2. A Prophetic Picture of Universal Peace

Jehovah "will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples."

This foreshadows world justice and law and a court to administer it.

God always uses and exercises his rule through human agencies. The powers that be are ordained of him and are his means of maintaining order and justice among men.

The same principle will extend to international and world peace.

There will always be questions that will arise among nations that call for examination and adjudication in accordance with facts and mutual rights, and so there must be some central agency or international court by which this work can be done. We already have such a court, in fact two of them, at The Hague and at Geneva, but these are not yet universally recognized. However they are buds that will yet unfold into a flower of peace.

A unified world court is a necessary means to world justice and peace and it is bound to be realized.

Then will be fulfilled the prophet's picture of the time when "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." The weapons of terrible destructiveness that are now used to kill men and destroy cities and devastate countries will then be converted into the instruments of peaceful industry to produce goods to feed and clothe people and promote the welfare of the whole world.

We have begun this process, for we are now using the airplanes and the tanks and the poisonous gas and other dreadful means of destruction that were invented and developed in the great war in travel and other lines of useful service.

A warless world was thus the vision of the prophet, and while this ideal is still far from being realized yet it is rising above the horizon and has the promise of the future.

We should do all we can to encourage and hasten the coming of this day.

3. An Altar to an Unknown God

Paul standing on Mars' Hill is one of the famous scenes of the Bible.

The introduction to a speech or sermon is a critical part of it and Paul gave a striking exhibition of his oratorical genius and tact.

"Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious." Paul thus appealed to the religious nature of the Greeks and by this masterly touch put himself in sympathy with his audience.

He first stood on common ground with them that he might lead them up to higher ground.

Moses would not do as a text here, for he must quote something that was known to them and would come home to their own bosoms with authority. The Greeks not only erected altars to all known Gods, but, that none might be missed, had erected one with the inscription, "To the Unknown God." Paul quoted this as his text and immediately announced the subject or proposition of his sermon: "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."

By this masterly stroke Paul put himself in still deeper sympathy with his hearers, as he in some degree identified himself with them in their worship and proposed only to illuminate it.

Paul came to the Greeks, not to uproot and destroy their religious faith, but to fill it out with larger truth and light and love, even with the fullness of God.

All the world's religious thoughts and faiths are broken lights of God and Jesus came to reveal him more clearly and with final illumination unto us: he that hath seen him hath seen the Father.

Here, then, is another broad ground on which to base universal peace: God is the Father of all men, however darkly they may know him and be worshiping him, and we are to recognize and treat them as his children and our brothers.

4. The True God Proclaimed

Paul now proceeds to take possession, for the true God, of this unoccupied realm that lay within the territory of Greek faith and worship.

He first sets forth God as Creator that made the world and all things therein and is Lord of heaven and earth.

Greek religion was pantheistic at its root and denied creation. Every part of nature, mountain and sea, wind and storm, was itself a divinity and not the product of divine creative agency.

This error was the root of the gross immorality of the ancient Greek and Roman world, as it still is of much immorality in the pantheistic religions of the Far East and in some forms of religion among us.

Paul laid the ax at the root of this error by separating God from his creation and exalting him above it.

From this grand monotheistic truth he drew the conclusion that God does not dwell in temples made with hands, such as the Parthenon up there, and is not served by men's hands, as idols were fed by the food set before them. Thus, without mentioning it, he delivered a telling blow at idolatry.

The most fundamental fact in our character and life is our thought of God.

This shapes and supports all our creed and conduct. If the foundation is wrong, the whole building will be wrong up to the spire's gilded point.

Hence we must start right, as the Bible does, by laying down as the cornerstone of our faith belief in one God as Creator and Lord of all.

This brings the whole world under his sovereignty and is another ground of universal obedience to him in universal peace.

5. God's Universal Fatherhood and Providence

Paul next sets forth God's universal Fatherhood and providence. "He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation."

This sweeping truth cuts down through pagan philosophy and practice as a startling and radical revolution.

The cherished beliefs of these Greeks, and of other ancient peoples also, including the Hebrews, was that men were not of one but of different origins and races and rank, and that each nation was the chosen people and favorites of their own God.

They all thanked God that they were not as other men were and despised others, a theory and spirit that have not yet passed out of the world, even of America. This doctrine split the world into a thousand warring fragments of selfishness and strife.

Paul struck this error down with the true principle of the universal Fatherhood and providence of God.

God is universal in his presence and care as is the air which covers all parts and inequalities of the globe equally so that all living things live and move and have their being in it; and so we live in God.

In confirmation of his teaching at this point Paul appeals to and quotes two of the Greek poets.

We have here a glimpse into Paul's acquaintance with Greek literature and again we see his power of adapting himself to his audience and fitting his thought into theirs.

To the Jews he quoted Moses and David, to the illiterate Gentiles of Lystra he quoted the heaven and earth and sea, and to the Greeks he quoted Aratus and Cleanthes.

He thus made himself all things to all men and found in every man's books some principle or ground that would lead him on to God in Christ.

He thus showed us how to approach all men of every nation on such grounds and with such forms of truth as will appeal to them and lead them into larger truth.

6. A Sectarian Question Grandly Answered

Our lesson passes to another famous scene, Jesus talking with the woman at Jacob's well in Samaria. The conversation was growing uncomfortably close and searching and the woman may have thought it was time to change the subject; besides, she thought she saw a chance to have a fierce denominational dispute between the Jews and Samaritans decided.

The burning point of this dispute was the proper place of worship, and Jerusalem and Gerizim were crowned with rival temples and altar flamed defiance at altar.

The woman submitted to Jesus the question of which was the true place of worship and possibly waited for an answer that she hoped would give her own mountain a triumphant vindication.

What did Jesus answer? He delivered the grandest discourse ever uttered on the universality and spirituality of worship.

He showed that worship is not a matter of mountains and temples, but of heart and spirit: no difference about the place. He wiped Jerusalem off the map as an exclusive center of worship and set worship free and diffused it around the world as a universal privilege.

In this answer he refused to take either side of the denominational dispute and virtually swept both sides away with a broader principle.

Jesus to-day is not interested in our little sectarian controversies and wants us to get away from them. If we lift our eyes to the grand mountains of worship, we shall lose sight of the little divisive ravines that lie around our feet.

Such worshipers the Father everywhere seeks.

Thus these several passages of our lesson converge upon universal grounds of brotherhood and faith and worship, and these leave no room for division and strife and war but bind the whole world into unity and common good will and mutual service.

War will be out of date and pass away when such a world is realized; and it will be realized only as he whose right it is reigns over it.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Have we yet caught up with the world views of the Hebrew prophets?
2. Does every heathen religion have some vital truth in it?
3. Is war a growing or a waning fact in the world?
4. Is the League of Nations a promising beginning of world unity?
5. Should our government join the world court?

LESSON VII—NOVEMBER 17

Living With People of Other Races

Lesson: Ruth 1:1–18; John 4:5–10; Acts 10:1–11:18; Romans 1:14; Galatians 3:28–29.

Golden Text: Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him. Acts 10:34–35.

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 3:14–21.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Treating Those of Other Races as We Should Like to Be Treated.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Contribution of Various Racial Groups to a Common National Life.

Lesson Text: Acts 10:9–15, 30–35; Galatians 3:28–29

9 Now on the morrow, as they were on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour:

10 And he became hungry, and desired to eat: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance;

11 And he beholdeth the heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth:

12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven.

13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill and eat.

14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean.

15 And a voice *came* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common.

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago, until this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel,

31 And saith, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call unto thee Simon, who is surnamed Peter; he lodgeth in the house of Simon a tanner, by the sea side.

33 Forthwith therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord.

34 And Peter opened his mouth, and said,

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him.

28 There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one *man* in Christ Jesus.

29 And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *Peter's Vision.*
2. *The Experience of Cornelius.*
3. *Directions Given to Cornelius.*
4. *Peter's Discovery.*
5. *Ye Are All One in Christ.*

As primitive men multiplied they scattered widely over the earth and then differences began to grow up among them. Their languages grew apart until they could no longer understand one another when they met, and these languages have now multiplied into more than a thousand, not counting dialects. They also grew apart in vocations, and some became agriculturalists and others became seafaring people. Climate began to affect their physical characteristics and during long periods races developed in which men differed in color, size and shape.

Out of all these differences grew antagonisms.

Men became strangers to one another and tribal and national rivalries and wars arose. This process of division has fairly well run its course and now the world is tending towards closing up these divisions into growing unity.

More and more are racial hatreds coming under the condemnation of the Christian world and the spirit of brotherhood is growing. It is our duty as Christians to help this tendency towards unity.

Yet the unity will not be solidarity, but a more complex and richer unity to which each nation and race will make some worthy contribution.

1. Peter's Vision

Our lesson opens with Peter down at Joppa and where he had a remarkable experience that revolutionized his views of the gospel.

The Jewish Christians at first thought that Christianity was only a reformed or advanced form of Judaism from which the Gentiles were excluded.

Deep racial differences and prejudices separated the Jews from the Gentiles and the Christian Jews had no thought that their new faith

was to be opened to the whole world. They still fondly believed that they were separate from and superior to the unclean Gentiles.

But at Joppa something happened that changed all this for Peter.

He had a vision of a sheet let down from heaven containing all manner of beasts which he was bidden to eat. This proposal shocked all his traditional views and prejudices on the matter of touching unclean things.

He boldly said he would not do it.

This drew upon him a severe rebuke from the Lord, and the voice spoke to him a second time and said, "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common."

The meaning of this acted parable, which was thrice repeated, was made plain a little later when Peter came into the presence of Cornelius and his house.

2. The Experience of Cornelius

While Peter was having his experience with the sheet let down from heaven, something was happening to Cornelius at Cæsarea, about thirty miles to the north.

He was a Roman soldier, captain of the Italian cohort stationed at that town. He is described as "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always."

His relation to Judaism is not clear, but he was a Gentile that had derived some light from Jewish revelation and had become a worshiper of Jehovah. Whatever the source of his religion, he was full of piety that expressed itself in prayer to God and love to men.

He was thus one of the reverent souls we find in unexpected places out in the heathen world, where to this day we find wild-growing saints that compare favorably with Christian worshipers in piety as we find wild flowers in the forest that rival cultivated blossoms in beauty.

God has not left himself without witnesses in any part of the world, and his Spirit works unseen and unknown to us in many hearts.

A bright-appareled figure stood before him and said, "Cornelius, thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God."

This gives us a view from the heavenward side of how true prayers are received. They reach a listening Mind and a sympathetic Heart and are received as a memorial or remembrance.

Such memorials give virtue to our prayers and make them effective with God.

When we ask God to do something for us, he remembers what we have done for others, and with what measure we mete it shall be measured out to us.

3. Directions Given to Cornelius

The angel now told Cornelius to send to Joppa for Peter and gave particular directions how to find him and promised that he would speak further.

The vision to Cornelius was thus accompanied with a definite work to do, and all true visions are matched with corresponding tasks. Any angel that appears to us will give us something to do.

Why did not the angel deliver the message directly to Cornelius instead of sending him so far away to Peter for it? We may suppose that there are some things that angels cannot do: they cannot preach the gospel; only human lips can tell this story.

At any rate, God often works through roundabout processes because he can thus reach ends that cannot otherwise be attained. This indirect process gave Cornelius a part in answering his own prayer.

This is a deep and universal principle in the working of prayer and providence.

When we ask God to do something for us he immediately gives us something to do ourselves, and out of our obedience comes his blessing.

With military promptness the Roman officer dispatched a devout soldier with two attendants off to Joppa to find Peter and tell the story.

This incident gives us a glimpse behind the scenes and lets us see how providence works.

These two men were prepared for each other so that when they met their experiences matched and they played into each other's hands and could serve each other.

God is always preparing us for our work and preparing our work for us so that when we reach it along the path of obedience we shall find it ready for us.

4. Peter's Discovery

While Peter was having his vision the messengers arrived and knocked at the gate and inquired for Peter. He went down to them and heard their story and the next day he went with them to Cæsarea, where he met Cornelius and heard his story.

It caused him great astonishment and it wrought in him a profound revolution.

Here was a Gentile that was manifestly under the guidance and blessing of God, and Peter's whole creed and habit of thought and the heredity distilled into him out of more than a thousand years of history experienced a jar and shock at the discovery. His most deeply imbred thought was that God was a respecter of persons and races; that he put a wide difference between the Jew and the Gentile with the favor all on the side of the Jew; that the Jew was his chosen child, the favorite of heaven, enjoying a monopoly of divine grace, in whose veins ran better blood than was to be found outside the charmed circle of Israel's race; and that the Gentile was an outcast, unclean, with no rights that God or Jew was bound to respect, at most receiving only some crumbs of God's uncovenanted mercies.

He believed and thanked God that God loved only one nation and that outside its borders he had no children and no interest.

But this distinction and chasm that had been so wide and deep and ineffaceable in his mind here suddenly closed up and was blotted out. In a moment it disappeared and he saw to his astonishment that there was no such distinction, that "God is no respecter of persons," and that "in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him."

There is a sense, of course, in which God is a respecter of persons: he respects their inner moral character.

But he does not respect their outer condition, as the Jews thought.

Birth and blood, ancestry and heredity, race and rank, wealth and social standing, fashion and fame, creed and church, are not matters that determine God's relation to and dealing with people. His classification runs along no such superficial lines as these, but strikes deep into the moral character and heart. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his, but no other condition excludes from his fellowship.

God has no favorites in the sense some people think.

Sectarianism is apt to breed in us the old Jewish feeling that we enjoy divine favoritism. It is easy for us to think that our church is a little nearer to heaven's gate than any other and that God has a specially comfortable feeling when he looks on us. Some small sectarians say outright that their church is the only true church and they unblushingly relegate all other Christians to the uncovenanted mercies of God.

But such antiquated narrowness must excite the mirth as well as the pity of heaven.

Provincial patriotism may have the same narrowing, blinding effect in leading us to think that our country is also a favorite of God and that he smiles on us as on no other nation.

This begets a spirit of national pride and boasting that marks us as provincials and becomes irritating to other nations and may develop friction and even kindle the flames of war.

It is time that we were learning that the Bible is a broad book, that the world is wide and that "the earth is Jehovah's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

The Father has many children and his grace flows over all human inequalities of condition and class as the atmosphere flows down into the valleys and up over the mountain tops.

This meeting of Peter with Cornelius resulted in Peter's baptizing the Roman officer and his household, and this affair at Cæsarea precipitated the first council at Jerusalem called to decide the question whether Gentiles should be admitted to the Christian Church (Chapter 11) and was the opening gun in the great battle between the con-

servative Judaizers, who were Jewish Christians that tried to restrict the church to the Jews, and the liberal Christians who expanded the church to include the Gentiles.

This was the great battle of the Apostolic church and its victory opened the door by which we enter the kingdom.

5. Ye Are All One in Christ

Paul was a mighty champion in this cause for Gentile liberty and more than any other apostle helped to win the victory. We are given two verses out of his Epistle to the Galatians, which probably was the first letter he wrote.

Some Judaizers had followed right on his heels in his first missionary journey through the villages in Asia Minor where he had established churches and tried to persuade his converts that they must now be circumcised according to the law of Moses in order to be Christians.

This would have been an intolerable restriction and burden upon the Gentiles and would have practically shut them out of the church.

When Paul soon after his return discovered the work of these Judaizers he wrote this Epistle to the Galatians to warn his converts against surrendering their liberty in Christ by submitting to this old Jewish yoke.

His epistle was a trumpet blast in the war against the Judaizers and was a tremendous weapon in this war.

Even to this day it bids us stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again in any old yoke of bondage.

It is in line with his argument to tell them that "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise."

Paul obliterates all these superficial distinctions with one stroke of his pen.

Race with him counts for nothing: only being in Christ determines real worth.

Here is the broad basis of living peaceably with the people of other races to-day.

Pride of birth and blood, of race and rank, is one of the deepest and bitterest causes of division and hatred, strife and war among men. It tends to turn every international boundary into a frowning frontier bristling with guns.

We can do much towards abating this spirit by cherishing and exercising Christian relations with men of all races and nations, classes and conditions. We have many foreigners in our country and can begin the practice of this better spirit right at home.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How did we all get into this country?
2. Have we, or have we not, a right to exclude foreigners?
3. Is there any injustice in our immigration laws to-day?
4. Do the blending of different races make a stronger and richer world?
5. What special contributions have leading races made to this richer unity?
6. Is the church free from the exclusive spirit of pride?

LESSON VIII—NOVEMBER 24

The Higher Patriotism

Lesson: The Book of Jonah.

Golden Text: He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth. Acts 17:26.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 55:1–7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Is True Patriotism?

Topic for Young People and Adults: Patriotism and Internationalism.

Lesson Text: Jonah 1:1–3; 3:1–5; 4:5–11

1 Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.
3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah; and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah.

1 And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time, saying,
2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.
3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of Jehovah. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey.
4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.
5 And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

5 Then Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.
6 And Jehovah God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to deliver him from his evil case. So Jonah was exceeding glad because of the gourd.
7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered.
8 And it came to pass, when the sun arose, that God prepared a sultry east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.
9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.
10 And Jehovah said, Thou hast had regard for the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:
11 And should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *A Fugitive Prophet.*
2. *A Penitent Prophet.*
3. *A Penitent Heathen City.*
4. *A Disappointed Prophet.*
5. *The Mercy of the Lord.*
6. *The Message of the Book of Jonah.*
7. *Methods of Interpreting the Book.*

The Book of Jonah is a foreign missionary tract inserted in the heart of the Old Testament. It is a flashlight shot out over the ancient world revealing the universal fatherhood and love of God.

It is a sharp rebuke to Jewish provincial bigotry and to all such national narrowness, and a revelation of the wideness and freeness of the divine mercy.

It contains only 48 verses and 1,328 words, so that it can be read through in a few minutes, yet how much it tells! Can any modern writer put so much into so few words? Count the first thirteen hundred words of any modern book and how far have we got, how little has been told?

The value of a book is measured not so much by the number of pages or volumes it fills or pounds it weighs. A diamond is worth more than a rock a million times its size and weight, and Hamlet is a greater literary treasure than many volumes of second-rate poetry.

The Book of Jonah contains only a few hundred words, but every word gives a graphic touch to the story and adds to the beauty of the teaching. The inspired writer has compacted the whole argument for foreign missions and at the same time compressed the theology of God's character and relation to the world into this brief tract.

As a literary achievement it ranks among works of genius, and as a religious revelation it has powerfully affected all Jewish and Christian thought and action.

1. A Fugitive Prophet

Jonah, the son of Amittai, was a prophet who foretold to Jeroboam II that he should restore " the border of Israel " (II Kings 14:25). Sud-

denly and unexpectedly, as an alarm of fire in the night, the command came to him from Jehovah, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."

The idea of such a mission threw the prophet into a panic of fear, and he forthwith arose and fled to Joppa, where he found a ship on the point of sailing to Tarshish in Spain. He paid the fare to that distant port, which he regarded as outside the jurisdiction of Jehovah, boarded the vessel, went down into it and fell asleep.

The ship put out to sea and presently was overtaken by a storm. The sturdy seamen, pagan men but deeply religious, called every man upon his God and cast overboard the freight to lighten and save the ship. But all their prayers and efforts were in vain, and then they remembered the strange passenger down in the hold.

They awakened him and called upon him to pray to his God. Lots were cast to find out who was at fault and the lot fell upon the passenger. Then the sailors plied him with a rapid succession of pointed questions, and Jonah realized that he had not yet escaped from the presence of Jehovah.

The prophet was instantly stricken with penitence and made a full and honest confession to the sailors. In their perplexity they asked him what to do, and he told them to cast him into the sea. The kind-hearted seamen were loath to do this and tried hard to bring the ship to land, but the storm increased and, uttering a prayer to Jehovah, they cast the stranger overboard and the sea grew calm.

2. A Penitent Prophet

A great fish swallowed Jonah and for three days and nights he had time to think over his folly in solitude.

His prayer and meditation are embodied in a beautiful psalm.

He found himself carried down into the depths where the waves and billows passed over him and the seaweeds were wrapped about his head; he went down under the bottoms of the mountains where the bars of the earth closed over him.

Yet Jehovah brought him up out of the pit. Out of his bitter experience he could say, "They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy." He was now ready to sacrifice unto Jehovah with thanksgiving and pay that which he had vowed.

This vow was his promise and pledge of obedience, and when the fish had vomited him out upon the land, the penitent prophet went straight to Nineveh and delivered his message.

3. A Penitent Heathen City

Nineveh was a great city and in the day of its power was the terror of the world. It stood as the monstrous embodiment of armed cruelty and strode over the world as a mighty colossus crushing peoples and cities ruthlessly under its iron feet.

It had been especially heartless to Israel and its very name struck terror into the heart of Jonah.

But now he was a different man and he boldly walked into it, uttering his ominous cry, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

The effect was startling.

"And the people of Nineveh believed God." That shows how normal to the human mind is belief in God.

The human soul everywhere matches God, reflecting his mind and answering to his spirit.

This affinity of the soul with God is the universal soil on which the seeds of foreign missionary teaching can be sown and out of which the fruits of the gospel can grow. If there were no such receptive soil in the heathen world there would be no use in our sowing the gospel there.

The Ninevites followed their belief with appropriate action. A fast was proclaimed and the people put on sackcloth from the greatest even unto the least. Repentance is not exclusively a Christian grace but a universal human experience as well known in heathen as in Christian countries.

What an example does this heathen city, sunk in superstition and vice, present to our modern cities in Christian lands that may be deeper in guilt! What a blessing it would be if such a call to repentance were followed with such genuine fruits of repentance in our great cities.

4. A Disappointed Prophet

At this point the breadth and brightness of God's universal grace are narrowed and darkened by man's mistaken prejudice and bigotry. Jonah, the very prophet sent to Nineveh to preach repentance and mercy, was disappointed at the turn of affairs and cried out against Jehovah. Nineveh was the enemy of his country, and he was angry that divine grace had saved it.

This throws a flash of light into his own state of mind and course of action.

"Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, and slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."

This confession shows that the Jews knew the universal mercy of God.

They had never been taught by their prophets that his grace was confined to them as his favorites, but they had been given many glimpses of his universal love. Yet they had so cherished and intensified a sense of their own privilege and worth that they had grown callous and blind to the outlying heathen world.

The same danger ever besets us. There are still those in Christian lands who are indifferent or opposed to foreign missions and seem to think that the heathen are outcasts from God, who have no claims upon his mercy or upon our sympathy and service.

The same spirit also leads us to look down on other nations with an air of haughty superiority that is a dangerous explosive in the international world.

5. The Mercy of the Lord

The Lord taught his narrow-minded and unfaithful prophet the truth by means of an object lesson.

Out on the east side of Nineveh Jonah sat in gloomy depression, waiting to see what would befall the repentant city, when a gourd sprang up and sheltered him from the hot wind, and he was exceeding glad.

A little personal comfort blotted out his sense of disappointment and filled his cup of satisfaction full.

It is wonderful how little of worldly success it takes to make some people forget their spiritual duties, especially the needs of the great sinful suffering world.

But the next morning the gourd withered, and the unsheltered rays of the hot sun beat down upon the unhappy prophet. Then he quickly fell back into his old pessimistic mood and imagined he wanted to die.

As little as it takes to lift some people up in satisfaction and pride, just so little does it take to cast them down.

This arises from a self-centered, self-conscious life, and the cure for it is to shift the emphasis of life from the center to the circumference; to look out and not in; up and not down; to be more conscious of others than of ourselves. Then our lives will flow in normal and healthy currents.

This was the cure administered to Jonah, as it was to Elijah at Mount Horeb. He was recalled from himself to that great city, and his little personal discomfort was lost in its vast needs.

And Jehovah said unto him, "And should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

This abrupt ending of the book is one of its masterful literary strokes.

God left this great question working in the mind of his prophet and trusted him to answer it himself.

And so does God trust us to answer this question, and our Christian hearts cannot let us go astray.

6. The Message of the Book of Jonah

There are many incidental and beautiful lessons in the Book of Jonah, but its main message is the universal providence and love of God. Jehovah heard the prayer of the heathen sailors on their sinking ship and he heard the cry of the great heathen city and turned from his threatened destruction.

He had the same mercy and forgiveness for heathen as for his own chosen people. Nineveh was as close to his ear and as dear to his heart as Jerusalem.

Judea was no little bit of the globe on which the sun of divine favor exclusively shone; the same beams of divine mercy fell around the whole earth.

The Jews were already drawing their robes of self-righteousness around themselves as a superior people and despising others, but God tore off their rags and showed them they were no better than others.

All the cities and countries of the world lie open to the sunshine of divine grace.

"In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him," and on this basis we proclaim the gospel to all men.

This broad truth is also a condemnation of any narrow nationalism that sets our country up in superiority over and antagonism with other countries.

No one disputes that patriotism is a necessary and noble virtue, but it becomes an evil and may curse the world when it is exalted into an exclusive spirit of pride and boasting: that way lie jealousies and enmities and war.

We should love our own country as we love our own home, and then we should love other countries as we respect the rights and privileges of other homes and love them too.

Christian patriotism and Christian internationalism are thus mutually harmonious and blend into the universal peace and brotherhood of the world.

7. Methods of Interpreting the Book

The various methods of interpreting the Book of Jonah are summarized by Professor John D. Davis in his "Dictionary of the Bible," and which we condense as follows:

"The narrative has been variously regarded as myth, legend, parable, history. The chief interpretations are: 1. The allegorical or parabolical. This conception of the prophecy is much in vogue, for it avoids the miracle, or, if no miracle was involved in the escape of Jonah, the extraordinary nature of the event. It interprets Jonah as a type of Israel fleeing from the duty imposed on the nation to bear witness to the world for God. The sea typifies, as frequently, the

raging nations; the sleep of Jonah represents Israel's sloth to fulfill its mission to the Gentiles, for which it is delivered into captivity to the world, but yet is preserved alive; having been disciplined, it is ready to engage in its appointed mission, but it is still narrow and needs to be taught the wideness of God's mercy. In support of this view it is pointed out that Jeremiah speaks of Nebuchadnezzar under the figure of a dragon swallowing Israel, but compelled to disgorge his prey (Jer. 51:34) and Hosea represents the exile of Israel as lasting three days (Hos 6:3). 2. The historical. This view has three supports: (1) The form of the book is historical. (2) Jonah himself was a historical person. (3) While it is conceivable that the words of Jesus concerning Jonah do not imply his belief in the events, yet it is probable that they do." The allegorical interpretation is more generally held by scholars to-day.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Did the Book of Jonah cure the Jews of their national narrowness?
2. Why is patriotism a necessary national virtue?
3. When does the virtue of patriotism become a national vice and menace?
4. How can we combine nationalism and internationalism in proper proportions into world unity?

LESSON IX—DECEMBER 1

The Christian Home in a Modern World

Lesson: Deuteronomy 6:3–9; Matthew 19:3–9; Luke 2:40–52; 24:28–32; Ephesians 6:1–10; II Timothy 1:3–5; 3:14–15.

Golden Text: Honor thy father and mother. Ephesians 6:2.

Devotional Reading: Colossians 1:9–18.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Living as Christians at Home.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Christian Home: Its Helps and Hindrances.

Lesson Text: Luke 2:40–52

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

41 And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast;

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not;

44 But supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey; and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance:

45 And when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him.

46 And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and asking them questions:

47 And all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

48 And when they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them: and his mother kept all *these* sayings in her heart.

52 And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***A Genuine Human Child.***
2. ***Slow Growth in Seclusion.***
3. ***At a Feast in Jerusalem.***
4. ***Astonished Parents.***
5. ***Obedience in the Home.***

How little we know about the childhood of the greatest Man that ever lived in this world! Two or three descriptive verses and one anecdote tell us all we know.

We would like to know more; for we are interested in the childhood of great men.

We are curious to see whether the stamp of greatness was on them from the beginning, or whether at first they were indistinguishable from other children. Sometimes genius buds in childhood, as in Mozart and Macaulay, but in other cases it sleeps unsuspected for many years. It lies like an explosive in the brain until some match or spark of circumstance touches it off, or like a seed which must wait for its summer.

Precocity is not always a favorable sign, and is often followed by arrested development.

We wonder what may have been the boyhood of Jesus and long for a peep behind the veil. As usual the apocryphal gospels are most voluble where the inspired gospels are most reticent. They fill the childhood of Jesus with marvels and miracles that are irrational and silly.

The broad difference between the books that were put into the Bible and the books that were kept out is one of the wonders and proofs of inspiration.

The gospels hide the childhood of Jesus from our view, giving us only these few verses as a hint of what lies behind the scene. Jesus grew in secret and did not come forth before the world until he was ready for his work.

We are growing increasingly interested in the Christian home as it is encountering new perils in our day, and we cannot do better than study this ideal childhood in this ideal home.

1. A Genuine Human Child

But while the gospels maintain an impressive silence, yet we know more than they tell and have considerable general knowledge of the childhood of Jesus.

We know he was a true human child and grew up through the stages and experiences of human life.

He nestled and cooed and smiled in his mother's arms. His "baby hand was pressed against the circle of the breast," and he was lulled to sleep with a cradle song. He took his first tottering steps and invented his first childish words. He played in his father's carpenter shop and went to the village school. There were brothers in the home and he grew up with them. He associated with the boys of Nazareth and was full of play.

We draw the line at any wrong thought or act. He was human and yet he was sinless.

But he was not a grown-up boy, such as we used to find in the Sunday school books, old beyond his years, morbidly self-conscious and pious; but a genuine boy, artless, inquiring, spirited, with his entire nature in free and healthy play. .

The whole charm of his boyhood lies in the fact that he was a boy and not something else.

Happy the home and wise the parents that can enable children to develop this unartificial natural life.

2. Slow Growth in Seclusion

. The child grew. Growth is the law of all greatness. The mountains are pushed up an inch a time, and the giant tree patiently adds cell to cell. Human life begins in unconscious infancy and must slowly increase in body and mind up to manhood.

Jesus obeyed this law.

He did not come as a preternatural child, but as an unconscious infant, and then he grew. He was subject to all the laws of growth, physical and mental. In the home and carpenter shop, in the school and synagogue, he grew day by day, lesson by lesson, and so increased in stature and wisdom.

He was not crowded forward and overtaxed in his work and growth, but he grew slowly and solidly.

He took things as they came in their proper order and was not in a hurry. Thirty years he grew in seclusion before he came forth strong to do his work.

He got ready before he began.

This is a law that should be observed in a normal home.

Children are often hurried forward too fast and pushed into publicity too soon. Parents are ambitious to have their children show signs of brightness and surpass other children, and they crowd them forward and often they irreparably injure them and sometimes they kill them.

It is pitiful to see children, through hot-house education or through dress and fashion, despoiled of their youth and made old beyond their years. Let them grow quietly and take things as they come: they will be young men and women soon enough.

Do not thrust them into excitement and the glare of the world, but keep them in seclusion and let them quietly increase in stature and wax strong in spirit, as Jesus did.

3. At the Feast in Jerusalem

The single recorded incident in the boyhood of Jesus is "a solitary flowret of the wonderful enclosed garden of thirty years." It occurred when he was twelve years of age.

This was a critical turning point in the life of the Jewish boy.

At this age he was obliged to learn a trade for his own support; he began to wear the phylacteries; and he became "a son of the law" and was then in some degree released from parental control. He was now thrown upon his own responsibility and began to take care of himself, and this fact sheds some light upon this incident.

Every year the parents of Jesus went to the feast of the Passover, at Jerusalem, the great religious festival of the Jews. Jesus had now reached the age when he was under obligation to go with them. Probably for the first time he stepped out of the seclusion of Nazareth into the publicity of the metropolis. It must have been with emotions of deep wonder and reverence and joy that he entered the holy city and witnessed its scenes and shared in the services of the temple.

He had a boy's interest and delight in the sights of the great city, but the center of interest for him was his Father's house.

While at the feast the boy became separated from his parents, and they started home without him, supposing that he was in the caravan with friends, a not unlikely or unusual occurrence. As he did not

appear at the end of the first day's journey, they became solicitous and then alarmed and started back to Jerusalem to find him. On the third day they found him in the temple in the midst of the rabbis, hearing them and asking them questions and displaying such wisdom that all were amazed.

It is a critical hour with a youth when he enters a great city and is there left to himself. Its attractions open before his feet many an alluring path to ruin.

Jesus was susceptible to these temptations, but his religious instincts and habits drew him to his Father's house.

He did not leave his religion behind in the village home when he went to the city.

The youth that is true to God in the city is safe.

This scene in the boyhood of Jesus has sometimes been despoiled of its truth and beauty by making it out that he was instructing these rabbis and showing off his superior wisdom. On the contrary, he was hearing them and asking them questions: he was not instructor but scholar.

Jesus never played the part of a smart boy, but was modest and teachable and kept his place in the presence of superiors; and it was this spirit of candor that excited the admiration of those that heard him.

A teachable spirit is a beautiful thing in a child, and it is just as beautiful in those of mature years. It is one of the primary elements of human Christian character and of all human greatness.

The atmosphere and example and teaching in the home should be such as will encourage and impart and develop this spirit.

4. Astonished Parents

The parents were astonished—struck with admiration, as the strong Greek word means—at the scene. Parents are proverbially pleased with and proud of signs of promise in their children, and Mary and Joseph experienced this delight in a rare degree as the religious genius of Jesus began to flash out.

Yet there was also an ominous element in the situation which drew from the anxious mother the chiding question, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing."

She realized that the lines of parental influence were slipping from her hands, and that henceforth she could control her boy less and less and that he would act for himself more and more.

That was a painful moment for Mary, and it is a trying moment for every father and mother when they see their children beginning to separate themselves from them and assert their own individuality and responsibility.

But this point must also be expected in the home and wisely received and even welcomed.

It is necessary and best that children should be permitted to exercise their own personality. Ripened seeds must drop off the tree, or there would be no more trees.

Mary's question elicited from Jesus his first recorded utterance: "How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?"

This reply is the kernel of this anecdote, the vital germ that kept it alive and caused it to blossom out in the gospel.

It expresses surprise in the mind of Jesus that his parents did not know that the attractions of the temple had kept him there and that there was his proper place and chief business. We must not be surprised when our children begin to exercise their own choice and personality and should not try to restrict them with our will and wishes. This excites in children a spirit of resentment and rebellion that may embitter them for many days or even for life.

Already at the age of twelve years Jesus had grasped the deepest purpose of his life. Already his life was perfectly set to the music of the Father's will.

Life with him was not idleness, or wealth, or pleasure, but service in the Father's house. Many people waste a good portion of life in finding out what they are here for, and some die without ever knowing why they were born.

Young people should discover as early as they can what their mission in life is and should find it in some form of the Father's business.

The parents of Jesus understood not his first recorded utterance—a sad commentary and mournful prophecy.

How often do we misunderstand our children and do they misunderstand us and what sad separations and tragedies this often involves. How often has Jesus been misunderstood and misrepresented so that his light has been turned into darkness!

And still the world misunderstands him, and very imperfectly do the most Christian minds penetrate into the depth and power of his meaning. His simple words are larger than our largest thoughts of him.

5. Obedience in the Home

"And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them." A wonderful record is this of the Son of God. This relation of course had in it no element of severity and bondage. There were no unreasonable harsh restraints on the one side, and no waywardness on the other.

Obedience was the disposition and habit and joy of Jesus.

He kept the fifth commandment and so increased in favor with God and man. This was the beginning of that path of obedience that led him all the way through the temptation past the cross up to the throne.

Had he begun by disobeying his earthly father, he would have ended by disobeying his heavenly Father.

Obedience is the foundation stone on which life is built, and it is laid in the home in obeying parents.

True obedience is not bondage, but noble liberty. The steel track does not restrict the liberty of the locomotive, but gives it all the liberty it has.

Right commandments are the steel tracks along which we can drive ourselves at utmost speed with perfect safety and thus enjoy the fullest liberty. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

These are the principles that should underlie and shape the Christian home, this is the atmosphere that should fill and silently mold it. Genuine children developing slowly in the sheltered quiet of the home, growing up in the church and learning its ways of worship and service, wise instruction and guidance with a

large spirit of trust in the children on the part of the parents, and obedience on the part of the children, these make the Christian home.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give an account of child life among the Jews in the days of Jesus.
2. What dangers beset American youth when they go to the city?
3. How shall young people find out their mission in life?
4. Are our children becoming increasingly self-willed and wayward?
5. Can you trace any of the childhood life of Jesus in his preaching?

LESSON X—DECEMBER 8

Helping Neighbors in Need

Lesson: Matthew 25:31–46; Luke 10:25–37; James 1:27; 2:14–17.

Golden Text: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Leviticus 19:18.

Devotional Reading: Luke 6:27–36.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How to Be a Good Neighbor.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Modern Good Samaritan: Who Is He?

Lesson Text: Matthew 25:31–46

31 But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats;

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in;

36 Naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink?

38 And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, *even* these least, ye did it unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand. Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink;

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me.

46 And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The King on the Throne.

2. The Principle of the Judgment.

3. The Surprise of the Righteous.
4. Service unto the King.
5. The Judgment upon the Wicked.

This passage is the conclusion of the great discourse delivered on the Mount of Olives and is a picture of the final judgment. The master Teacher handles the great theme with the sovereignty and ease of deity.

This majestic scene is not a remote and shadowy event, but Jesus brings it near and its light shines down upon our common duties and everyday deeds. It verily teaches us "how to be a good neighbor" and "the modern Samaritan."

1. The King on the Throne

The scene opens with the Son of Man, having come in his glory with the angels, sitting on his throne.

Jesus did not hesitate to put himself on this throne: yet this amazing assumption excites in us no thought of absurdity or presumption on his part, but seems in him perfectly natural.

The pure and humble and modest Jesus wears the robe of divinity with unconscious ease and grace because he is to the manner born, it is his birthright and he is simply ascending the throne whence he descended. From the cross he has gone up to the crown, "the head that once was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now," and he whose right it is reigns.

Before him shall be gathered all nations. The dead, small and great, shall stand before God; before him shall assemble the men of all ages and races and countries, a vast multitude whom no man can number.

But the vastness of the multitude will put no undue strain upon the powers of the Judge and will afford no possibility of escape to any single soul.

No one can elude the eye of the Judge by hiding in the crowd. As gravitation holds the planet in its grip by grasping every atom of it, so the final judgment will judge nations and multitudes by judging individuals.

Discrimination and separation will mark that day.

Here all are mingled in one mass in which their true nature in some degree is hidden. In this mixed world, also, reward and retribution often seem to go astray; inward character and outward condition do not match. All lines of right classification thus seem to be crossed and confused in this world.

But at the last day this infinitely knotted and tangled skein shall be untangled and straightened out and every thread shall be seen in its true color.

Sheep and goats are the expressive terms used to designate the righteous and the wicked, suggesting the attractiveness of the one and the repulsiveness of the other. These are intermingled in the great flock of this world, but on that day they shall be unerringly separated and the sheep placed on the right hand and the goats on the left.

Let us not think that because we are all living together here we are all going to the same place.

2. The Principle of the Judgment

What is the principle of the separation? Shall any favoritism or prejudice or unfairness influence the decisions?

Abraham answered this question when he exclaimed, Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

The King first pronounces judgment upon the righteous, saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The reward of the righteous is fellowship with the righteous King in the kingdom.

Like goes to like, righteous subjects to the righteous King.

The righteous may be persecuted and despised in this world, but they shall at last rise and reign. The kingdom they inherit dates from the foundation of the world; God has been a long time preparing the reward of the righteous and it is ready for them.

The ground of the reward is next announced: "I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

These are the fruits of a good life, the outflowering of a loving heart, the healing leaves of a good tree.

They are not conspicuous and heroic deeds that attract attention and seem to call for special recognition and reward, but are just the common acts of good will and courtesy that should be sown broadcast as seed every day. These are just the "little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love that make the best portion of the good man's life."

These are the things that make good neighbors and turn every one of us into a "modern Good Samaritan."

These are things for which the world is hungry and which would solve most of its problems and lift its burdens and make its weary waste blossom out of the dust. They are the very things which Jesus did as "he went about doing good" and which he told us we can do also, only on a larger scale.

The principle of this judgment is that the life here shall be the basis of reward there. A life of love here shall be perpetuated and shall lose itself in the life and love of God.

Judgment, then, works no change in the other world, but simply reveals and emphasizes what has been in this world.

The sheep were sheep and the goats were goats before ever they were assembled in judgment and the final day only separates them. Life is sowing and judgment is reaping: we shall reap there just what we have sown here.

This invests the present life with enormous responsibility.

Every deed instantly crystallizes into destiny, drops into the soul a seed that will bear its final fruit on the day of judgment. We are every day in our most common acts of service and sympathy, kindness and courtesy, building for the soul a house beautiful that shall be its eternal home. No good deed of ours is ever lost, but is stored up for us against that day.

Righteous living is here fashioning for us that righteous crown which is laid up for us and which we shall wear forever.

Where, then, comes in the grace of God and the redemption of Christ? Is not this salvation by works? It looks like it at first sight,

but a true view discloses a deeper root. These good deeds were done in the spirit and for the service of the King.

Jesus saw in those that thus ministered to others his own likeness; they were filled with his mind. Consciously or unconsciously they had been with him and had received of his grace.

3. The Surprise of the Righteous

The righteous express surprise at the judgment of the King and inquire when they had done these things. They had attached no such importance to their deeds and do not even remember having done them.

This reveals the unconsciousness of perfected goodness.

Acquiring skill in any line is at first a painful process, but as it proceeds it grows easier and more automatic until all effort is lost in unconscious habit. The beginner on the piano is embarrassed and obstructed by every note and key, but the master musician is scarcely more conscious of the instrument and score than he is of his nerves. He has wrought the very instrument into his nervous system so that it acts along with his nerves at the bidding of his will. It is thus that we learn to walk and talk and carry on all the complex activities of life.

Not until we have grown unconscious of the processes by which we do things do we do them well.

No one is a good mechanic who must think about how to hold his tools: the skilled mechanic uses his tools without thinking about them and is scarcely conscious of them. It is just so in our growth in goodness. As long as our virtue is a matter of conscious thought and effort with us, it is imperfect. Must an honest man try to be honest? No, he will be honest without trying. He never thinks of his honesty, scarcely knows that he has it and would be surprised if he were told about it.

This is why these righteous ones on the day of judgment did not seem to know about the good deeds they had done.

They did not remember them any more than they remembered their breathing and sleeping: they were all the unconscious breathing and outflowing of their righteous souls.

Some people's goodness is their constant trouble: they must ever watch it and work at it to keep it going. Other people have passed this preparatory stage of training and have attained unto that habit and perfection of goodness in which all effort is forgotten and lost in the joy of doing good.

The sun does not know that it shines, Moses wist not that his face shone, and we may verily attain unto this unconscious perfection and joy.

4. Service unto the King

The King answers them that inasmuch as they did these things unto one of his brethren, they did them unto him.

The King's domain is broad and all true service in it is rendered unto him.

All men are Christ's subjects and brethren, and kindness to any human being is kindness unto him. This immensely broadens the field of Christian service and faithfulness. Christ is not only at the Father's right hand, but he is also on earth and everywhere in the world. He is not only in the church but also outside the church and may be found in every human soul.

We must beware of thinking that we are religious only when we are doing religious things such as going to church.

Worship is our sense of the worthship or worth of God, even his cash value to us, and we are showing how much we think he is worth to us in all our giving and deeds to others. In handing a drink of water to a thirsty man, or speaking a kindly word to a passing stranger or soothing the sobbing of a crying child, we are ministering to Christ. We may find him in a neighbor's sick room or in a filthy cell in a city jail.

Every good deed is done to Christ, though we know it not. The garb of a stranger, even of a beggar, may conceal his robe which, if we had eyes to see, might show its royal purple and bejeweled embroidery gleaming through the rags.

Let us beware how we pass by a stranger heedlessly when we could extend to him a helping hand, for in so doing we may be turning away from the Lord Christ.

5. The Judgment upon the Wicked

Judgment is now pronounced upon the wicked. No new law is introduced, but precisely the same principle is applied to the wicked as to the righteous.

Deeds done in the body are the test; seed sown in this world determines the harvest reaped in the next world.

They had not shown a spirit of love going out in goodness to their fellowmen. They had not been good neighbors and played the part of the Good Samaritan along the highways of life. And their judgment is just the logical continuation and completion of their loveless lives: separation from the good and loving and segregation and isolation by themselves.

The law of the reward is also the law of retribution: whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.

What we do here we shall be there; if we sow to the flesh we shall of the flesh reap corruption.

Hell fire is just our own faults and failures bursting into flames. We have already kindled eternal burnings in our own souls and only the grace of God can put them out.

The wicked, too, were surprised at their sentence and wanted to know when they had failed to minister to the King.

The King pointed out to them wherein they had missed seeing him.

They had the same opportunities for ministering to him that the righteous had, but they lacked the loving heart to see them. The world is just as full of good opportunities for one as for another; but we can see only what we have eyes to see, only what our nature will let us see.

Our sympathies are the eyes of the soul to show us opportunities for doing good and to make us sensitive to them.

One man may be blind to what another sees, just as one man is blind to the sunset that kindles the poet's or the painter's soul into a glow of beauty and mystic joy.

We are poor and blind indeed if we can walk through this world and not see opportunities on every side for sympathy and

service that would enrich us as well as those whom we serve. And if we are seared in our souls to these higher and finer things of life, our condemnation is upon us and may harden into eternal doom.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Is judgment working now in this world?
2. What would the world be without judgment?
3. Should we try to be conscious of or to forget our goodness?
4. How can we be good neighbors?
5. Give the parable of the Good Samaritan.

LESSON XI—DECEMBER 15

The Christian Spirit in Industry

Lesson: Exodus 1:8–14; 20:17; Deuteronomy 24:14–15; Amos 5:6–15; Zechariah 8:16–17; Matthew 20:1–16; Mark 12:1–9; Luke 3:14; Ephesians 6:5–9; I Timothy 6:17–19.

Golden Text: As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. Luke 6:31.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 6:17–19.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Fair Play in the Day's Work.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Golden Rule in the Work of the World.

Lesson Text: Deuteronomy 24:14–15; Ephesians 6:5–9; I Timothy 6:17–19

14 Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy sojourners that are in thy land within thy gates:

15 In his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it (for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it); lest he cry against thee unto Jehovah, and it be sin unto thee.

5 Servants, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

6 Not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men:

8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing each one doeth, the same shall he receive again from the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free.

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening: knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him.

17 Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not high-minded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is *life* indeed.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Oppress Not the Poor.

2. Give Him His Hire.

3. The Principle of Obedience.
4. Doing Good Work.
5. A Message to the Rich.

Our lesson brings the gospel down into business and applies it to the problems of the economic world. For a long time this application was not made except in the most general way and business and the church went on their respective ways largely independent of each other. Business supported religion, but religion did not interfere with business, and as long as this division and separation of interests was maintained, they got along together smoothly enough.

But our social conscience has been growing broader and deeper and keener and religion is now prying into fields and conditions that it formerly passed by.

It looks into the relations of capital and labor, employer and employe, profits and wages, housing and sanitation, and into all the conditions that affect the welfare of the people. Not that it attempts to work out a technical solution of these problems and to give judicial decisions on them, but it does endeavor to inform itself about them with a view to teaching such principles and especially infusing such a spirit into them as will enable well meaning men of Christian spirit to work out their solution in mutual justice and brotherhood.

Our lesson throws light on some of the most important of these problems.

1. Oppress Not the Poor

"Oppress not the poor" is one broad principle and condition of right business relations. In our present economic order with wealth and power congested in a few hands, there is great opportunity for those in power to take advantage of those subject to them. In a great corporation the ruling power has become almost impersonal with the stockholders at a distance and directors who administer its affairs with little personal knowledge of its workmen.

This chasm between owners and employees tends to eliminate the factor of personal acquaintance and sympathy and to grind the employees through a great soulless machine.

In such an organization the workers may have little power to right their wrongs, real or imaginary, and feel that they are in the grip of a despotic tyrant.

It is important that corporate ownership and management should take notice of this condition and see to it that the wages and working conditions are such as are required by justice and brotherliness.

Especially should the working conditions be such as will not inflict sanitary and social injury upon men and women. The same spirit of right relations and treatment should enter into our individual relations with employees, such as servants in the home. We are to consider that all people in our employ are our "brethren," and this spirit should save us from selfishness and hardness of heart and should protect them from injustice and guarantee to them their full rights.

But even the old Mosaic law went beyond "brethren" to the "sojourners that are in thy land within thy gates." This means that we are to be just and brotherly towards the foreigners in our land and give them the same fair treatment we do to our own people. We have not been doing this in our country, but in many ways have been treating them with injustice and even with cruelty that have engendered resentment against us.

We cannot be unjust towards foreigners without working injury to ourselves and may be sowing seeds of reprisal and war.

2. Give Him His Hire

The old law now grows specific and points out one application of justice that is often violated: "In his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it." The world over and the ages through the proper division of the fruits of labor between the employer and the employee has been a matter of dispute and trouble; and in our modern world, when capital and labor have become separated beyond personal acquaintance and contact, this trouble has been intensified and embittered.

But economic laws are having their way with the result that it has been discovered that high-wage labor is most efficient and profitable

and the level of wages has risen. Yet in numberless cases injustice still rules and the laborer is not given his just share but is beaten down to the lowest limit.

We should see to it that in so far as we have people in our employ we give them a fair wage.

But we should also go deeper and endeavor to promote such general conditions and secure such laws as will insure to men their just share of the products of industry.

Prompt payment is enjoined in the requirement that wages shall be paid before the sun goes down in accordance with the custom of that time. Wages are not now ordinarily paid daily, but at longer intervals, and it is important that payment should be made on the appointed day.

Delayed wages may work cruel hardship.

Ministers' salaries are not infrequently permitted to get in arrears with resulting inability to meet debts as they fall due. A warning is raised against such delinquency in the payment of wages, "for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto Jehovah, and it be sin unto thee."

God is down in the mill and office and when wages are withheld he hears the cries of distress and will work requital.

Injustice in the whole economic order begets resentment and anger that may result in rebellion and a strike that will disturb the public order and in time may accumulate into a magazine of wrath that will explode in a social revolution.

God is present in the economic order and will not let injustice have its way without retribution.

3. The Principle of Obedience

Paul now takes up the same subject and treats it from the point of view of his time. "Slaves, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ."

He is living in the days of slavery and he recognizes it as an existing institution.

We might think he should have exposed and opposed it and tried to end it. But in that day it was so rooted in existing law and custom that violent methods would have done little good and would have rather worked harm. And so Paul enjoins upon the slaves to be good slaves and serve "with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ."

Yet he puts into the relation the Christian spirit, as he also enjoins the same spirit upon the masters, and thus Christianity breathed upon these hard fetters a balmy breath that in time melted them into the freedom that prevails throughout Christendom to-day.

Slavery has gone, but obedience remains.

This relation is woven deeply and universally into our life so that we all are servants, not as slaves that are owned and bought and sold in the market, but as free persons who are yet under obligations to others. Ties of mutual dependence and obligation bind us together from infancy to the last hour and breath of life, and we can no more escape these relations and live than we can escape from the atmosphere and gravitation.

The child should obey the mother and father, the scholar the teacher, the soldier the officer, the patient the physician, the employee the employer, and so runs this line of obligations through the whole web of life.

Obedience is the foundation of liberty, the track on which we can drive ourselves with speed and safety, and when we refuse to obey and run wild we become tramps and criminals and will plunge into the ditch.

It is our safety and peace and usefulness and happiness to know how at every point in life to exercise the habit and spirit of obedience "in singleness of heart, as unto Christ."

4. Doing Good Work

Paul adds some admonitions as to the kind of work servants and all workers should do that are much needed in our modern world: "not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men." Here our work is identified with the work and will of God so that in whatever ways we are serving one another we are also serving him.

Therefore God is our real Master and Employer and we should do all our work as in his presence and so as to please him.

This will lift our work out of drudgery into divine relations and transfigure the humblest and hardest task with a celestial light.

Especially do we need to take care that we do not degenerate in our work into mere "eyeservice as men-pleasers:" skimping our work, merely putting in the time with the eye on the clock to drop it at the first stroke of the hour. The idea and spirit has crept into some workers that the less work they do for their employers the better off they will be, as it is supposed that this leaves that much more work for them to do.

This is an economic fallacy as well as an ethical wrong, as wages can be paid only out of the products of labor, and the less the production the smaller the wages must be.

Besides it is a dishonest method and spirit as the worker agrees to give so much service for the stipulated wages and ought to fulfill his promise and bargain.

We need workers who put in the full time and do the best work they can, work that will stand the test of use and last and be honest goods on the market; workmen who leave no loose joints and rough places that others must tighten up and smooth off afterwards.

Fair wages should be promised and paid and then fair work should be given.

The golden rule should be applied to both ends of every bargain and especially to the relation of capital and labor, employer and workman.

Paul again brings the whole relation of master and servant, employer and employee, under the Christian relation of obedience to Christ, "knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him."

Let the whole industrial world and economic order be flooded and pervaded with the Christian spirit and all these problems will be justly and happily solved.

When Christ is the Master of all parties, justice and brotherhood will rule. This will solve these troublesome questions and nothing else will.

5. A Message to the Rich

In writing to Timothy Paul gives him a charge to give to the rich and it goes deep into our modern world. There are rightly those "that are rich in this present world" and it is a grave social wrong to give the impression that the rich are necessarily robbers.

As a rule they have rendered service corresponding with their wealth.

But wealth has dangers that have ever attended it and are the cause of much of the prejudice against it.

The rich are apt to grow high-minded or haughty and domineering and this is a deadly social sin.

They should not set their hope "on the uncertainty of riches," for they fly away over night.

Especially should they acknowledge and discharge the social obligation of wealth, "that they do good, and that they be rich in good works, that they be willing to distribute, willing to communicate." Wealth is so much stored up service, the very blood and bone of men minted into coin, and therefore it should not be wasted in mere luxury and pleasure but should be turned back into the channel of human welfare.

Many are the opportunities and calls for such service in education and religion and philanthropy and art, and many are the splendid endowments and foundations that are now being created.

These are among the most useful and worthy fruits of our Christian spirit, and we all should so use our wealth that it will serve others and lay up for ourselves "a good foundation against the time to come."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is the Golden Rule?
2. Who is to determine what is "fair play in the day's work"?
3. How can we learn to take delight in our work whatever it may be?
4. May the poor be "high-minded" as truly as the rich?
5. What share of our income belongs to the Lord?

LESSON XII—DECEMBER 22

The Child in a Christian World (Christmas Lesson)

Lesson: Matthew 18:1–6; Mark 9:36-37, 42; 10:13-16; Luke 2:1–20.

Golden Text: Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 19:14.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 11:1–9.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Finding and Following Right Leaders.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Christian Obligations to Childhood.

Lesson Text: Luke 2:8–20

8 And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock.

9 And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people:

11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

12 And this *is* the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men
in whom he is well pleased.

15 And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.

17 And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child.

18 And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Angels and Shepherds.***
2. ***The Good News.***
3. ***The Sign of the Swaddling Clothes.***
4. ***The Angel Chorus.***
5. ***Let Us Go.***
6. ***The Babe.***

This wonderful story never loses its charm and is the one universal piece of news that everywhere is welcome. In our own country and in far strange lands, down under burning tropics and up along frozen northern shores, it tells its message of gladness and sets all the bells ringing with joy.

Our age is eager for news, the cry of the newsboy is ever in the air, we snatch the latest papers damp from the press, but the greatest and most interesting news in the world to-day is the old yet ever new story that was first told to shepherds at Bethlehem.

1. Angels and Shepherds

Earth was unconscious of this divine birth, but heaven knew it. There was holy ecstasy in all the shining ranks above, and angels came in the spring, in songful mood, to scatter the music of the good news over the earth.

The Christ-child was born, and now the problem was to get the news into the world.

Where shall the angels begin, what human ears shall be the first to hear the wonderful things? Let them go up to Jerusalem, we would have said, and call upon the High Priest and first take him into their confidence, and then let them go to the temple and stand amidst the splendors of that holy sanctuary and announce to the assembled priests and scribes that prophecy was fulfilled and that the long-expected Messiah had come.

Shall not some respect be paid to official places and dignitaries?

Has not God ordained priests and bishops through whom he dispenses his grace and administers his kingdom?

Yet history witnesses that at times few men stand in God's way more than ecclesiastics.

They are rarely the men that hear a new message: God must usually tell it to somebody else first.

One of the most startling things in the Bible is the fact that the announcement of Christ's birth was made, not to priests, but to shepherds. The gospel was first preached, not in a church, but in a pasture field where there were more sheep than men to hear.

What a rebuke and warning is this to our ministerial pretension and pride!

God can easily dispense with us and pass us by to speak to some humbler soul. The great people up in the temple and university have no monopoly of his grace and truth, and it may break out in some wholly unofficial and unexpected place.

The gospel is no respecter of persons.

It may be preached in a costly church or stately cathedral, but it is equally at home in a country school house or an extemporized wooden tabernacle or in a sheep pasture. In simplicity and catholicity it is adapted to all classes and conditions of life.

It has the same message for priest and people, prince and peasant, scholar and shepherd, and all may receive from it an equal welcome and blessing.

2. The Good News

On the night of the nativity these shepherds were in the field keeping watch over their flocks, for those engaged in the lowliest duties may receive a splendid heavenly visitation. The sleeping sheep lay like drifted snow on the ridges, all things around them were wrapped in slumber and silence, and the shepherds had no premonition that the great event for which the ages had grown into readiness was near. The sky was as calm and the stars burned as serene as on other nights, and yet the heavens were tense with expectation and were about to break into celestial song.

Suddenly a mysterious visitor appeared and an unearthly glory shone around them as though the splendor of heaven were pouring down through the rent sky.

The simple-minded shepherds were sore afraid, as wiser people would have been. "Fear not," was the first word of the angel. Sin has sown such fear in the world that our heavenly Father himself must not come too near, even to rescue us, without calling out as he approaches, Fear not!

There are many and great reasons for fear in this world, but the coming of Jesus into it is not one of them.

His only mission is to release us from the bondage of sin and death and fill us with that perfect love that casts out fear.

What can fulfill so great a promise as to free us from fear? What is the "good tidings of great joy" the angels came to announce? "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Are we a bit disappointed?

Were we rather looking for some material blessing, richer harvests and finer houses that would increase the wealth and comfort of the world? If so, we were looking in the wrong direction and were missing the world's true need. Sin is the root of all our troubles, economic, social and political, and nothing else can do us so much good as a Saviour who cleanses us from our sin.

God made no mistake in his Christmas gift to the world and gave us the greatest possible blessing when he gave us Christ.

3. The Sign of the Swaddling Clothes

Definite directions were given for finding the newborn Saviour. In the city of David the shepherds would find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. The angelic message was not simply a song in the air, a halo of heavenly light, a fading vision, but it bound itself down to definite places and circumstances and left something substantial.

Christianity is historical and roots itself down in reality as solid as the rocky ridge of Judea.

It is not a beautiful legend or myth, but it fits itself into the rigid framework of history and gives names and dates and places. It was not done in a corner and is not afraid of facts.

The babe was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.

Jesus was a true human child and took upon him our form down to his infant clothes.

We might have expected that he would have been laid on softest down and covered with silken empurpled robes, but the Saviour of the world did not separate himself from common humanity by any such mark of distinction. He was closer to the great heart of the

world in that manger than he would have been on a golden couch up in a palace. The Christ is a great wonder in his divine personality, but we can understand his swaddling clothes.

Christianity is not all a mystery, but it also comes down close around us and embodies itself in many plain facts and duties.

"Ye shall find the babe." The shepherds were not left to wander around in search of the child, but were given clear directions that led straight to his manger.

Christ is not hidden from us, we do not have to grope after him in uncertainty but can go immediately to him, and every soul that seeks him shall find him.

4. The Angel Chorus

The announcement of the angel was accompanied with a chorus of heavenly voices that broke from the gallery of the sky. A shower of song fell upon the rude shepherds.

Kings and artists never heard such a concert, yet it was rendered in a sheep pasture.

Artists are generally particular about whom they will entertain, and a high price is asked for tickets to their concerts, but angels do not demand cultivated hearers and will sing for anybody and in any place, even in a sheep pasture, and no tickets of admission are required and no money is asked.

Heaven's best gifts are open to all without money and without price.

The angels' chorus is a broad interpretation of the meaning of Christ's birth. It first ascribes glory to God, for all good things come from God and manifest his glory as the light manifests the glory of the sun. The glory of God then manifests itself in peace and good will among men, even as the glory of the sun manifests itself in the green verdure and blossoming fields and fruit-laden trees of our earth.

The glory of God and the peace of men are never in antagonism, but are always complementary and harmonious; they are the root and fruit, the two parts of the same song.

They cannot be separated and must go together; if we have the one we shall have the other.

In glorifying God we work peace among men, and in working peace among men we glorify God.

5. Let Us Go

The song died away in the solemn silence and the shepherds were left alone. It was a critical moment with them. Shall they follow the vision, or shall they let it vanish with the last echo of the song and relapse into the old dull routine?

No, they did not let it pass and life was never the same to them again. "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." They translated the message into action and presently were climbing the rocky slope to Bethlehem. They were not simply content to hear of so great a wonder but were bent on seeing it. Had these shepherds not followed up the message, their knowledge of their Messiah would have stopped right there.

We hear divine messages enough, but too often we let them fade into the light of the common day and pass into forgetfulness. The grandest vision that ever swept through our brain or illuminated our sky leaves no vestige of worth unless it is turned into conduct and character.

Song must become service or it is simply so much troubled air. Seeing is believing, and this is the simplicity and saving power of the gospel.

There are many that wish to enjoy the esthetic beauty of Christian worship, its music and eloquence, its story told in stained glass and upreared in glorious architecture, but who enjoy these as a mere esthetic luxury and do not turn the worship into work and the song into service and sacrifice. But such worship may be empty of religious spirit and be vain, even a mere show.

Worship ought to be worthily beautiful and stately, but if it goes no deeper than stained glass and fine music, it will not save the soul and will not feed the world with the bread of life. Let us go and see this divine Child that we may receive his spirit and turn his gospel into the good of the world.

6. The Babe

Promise was exactly matched with fulfillment. "Ye shal' find a babe," was the promise of the angel, and now the record reads, "And they came with haste and found the babe."

When did God ever lead us by explicit promise or implicit instinct to expect anything and then disappoint us?

He gave us thirst that urges us to seek water, and we find sparkling springs and streams. He gave us hunger for bread, and we find fruitful field and orchard. He gave us craving for love, and he hath set the solitary in families. He hath set eternity in our hearts that urges us to cry, "Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us." Shall all these lower needs be satisfied, and this supreme search and cry of the soul be disappointed and mocked?

"Ye shall find a babe," is the answer to this heart cry and supreme need.

God sends us with all our deep cravings and mysterious longings to that cradle in Bethlehem where they are exactly matched and fulfilled. He that hath seen him hath seen the Father.

There is room around him for us all; there is fulness in him to satisfy all our need, and no one seeking him sincerely shall be turned empty away.

The shepherds, having seen for themselves, immediately began to make known abroad the saying which was told them concerning the child. The gospel is expansive and cannot be shut up in the heart. We no sooner receive it than we begin to give it.

Let us now go even unto Bethlehem while the song is in the air and see this thing which is come to pass, and we shall return glorifying and praising God.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why are we so eager to hear news?
2. How can we determine the relative importance of news?
3. What does the humanity of Jesus do for us?
4. Show how the glory of God and the peace of men work together.
5. How can we go to Bethlehem and what can we do when we come away?

LESSON XIII—DECEMBER 29

Fellowship Through Worship

Lesson: Nehemiah 8:1–12; Micah 4:1–2; Psalm 122:1–9; Matthew 28:18–20; Hebrews 10:19–25.

Golden Text: He entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day. Luke 4:16.

Devotional Reading: Revelation 7:9–17.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Taking a Real Part in Worship.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Common Worship and the Community Spirit.

Lesson Text: Psalm 122: 1–9; Hebrews 10:22–25.

1 I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go unto the house of Jehovah.
2 Our feet are standing
Within thy gates, O Jerusalem,
3 Jerusalem, that art builded
As a city that is compact together;
4 Whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of Jehovah,
For an ordinance for Israel,
To give thanks unto the name of Jehovah.
5 For there are set thrones for judgment,
The thrones of the house of David.
6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
They shall prosper that love thee.
7 Peace be within thy walls,
And prosperity within thy palaces.
8 For my brethren and companions' sakes,
I will now say, Peace be within thee.
9 For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God
I will seek thy good.

22 Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water,

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised:

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works;

25 Not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting *one another;* and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Glad It Was Church Time.

2. Worship in the Temple.

3. A Throne of Judgment.

4. The Peace of Jerusalem.
5. For Companions' Sakes.
6. Forsaking Not Assembling Together.

Instead of a review of the Quarter, the lesson closes the year with a look into the hymn book of the Jewish church. The Jews were a singing people and their worship blossomed out into immortal songs that are still singing their way through the world.

The present Psalm is one of fifteen that are each one termed "A Song of Ascents." The probable explanation of this title is that these Psalms were sung by the Jews as they ascended from all quarters of the land to Jerusalem to attend the great feasts. It would be natural for them to beguile the tedium of the journey and express their joy in songs, and we have a collection of the Psalms that were used in this way.

1. Glad it Was Church Time

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah."

Here was a man that was glad that it was church time!

Some people would regard this as a very singular state of mind. Poor man, they would say, what did he want to go to church for? Did he have no automobile that he might ride off into the country, or no Sunday newspaper that he might bury himself in its vasty deeps? Why did he not lie around the house and read the latest novel? Could he not sleep at home? Why should a man go to church and endure its dry dronings and intolerable tedium? Who was this man, anyway?

This man was David! Now does our smart critic know who he was?

David was a man of considerable importance once upon a time. He was king of an empire that cut a large figure in history three thousand years ago.

He was also something immensely greater than a king: he was a poet who wrote some of the finest lyrics and sweetest songs whose undying music is still echoing through the world.

All this he was and did three thousand years ago, and yet he is still known and loved and his inspired ballads are sung in many lands and tongues.

How many men live three thousand years after they are gone? How much of Tennyson or Browning will remain after three millenniums? Where will our carping critic who knows no better than to sneer at the church be three thousand or three hundred or even thirty years after he is gone?

David was glad that it was church time, and David was no simpleton.

Some very bright men have gone to church regularly. Gladstone always went to church; so did Washington and so did Lincoln and Lee.

We are in good company when we go to church and there are excellent reasons why we should be glad when they say unto us, Let us go into the house of the Lord.

2. Worship in the Temple

Some of these reasons are forthcoming in this very Psalm. Jerusalem was a city of hallowed associations and the Jews were glad to set their feet within its gates. There were the temple and the priesthood and the public worship, and all the surroundings of the city were holy. Their hearts leaped as they passed through its gates and saw its sacred scenes.

It is worth going to church simply to be tuned into seriousness and solemnity.

The secular and worldly spirit is so pervasive and powerful that it threatens to submerge our life: we need meditation and worship. The soul that has no sacred places and quiet hours and reverent moods is living a shallow life. The church is such a shelter from the superficial noise and excitement of the world where we may keep silence and hear God speak.

It is restful and spiritually healthful and should make us glad to stand within its gates and worship.

The Jews went up to Jerusalem as tribes: that temple was for all the people and there they were unified.

This is another reason why we should go to church: there all differences of rank and race are merged into the unity of the common Fatherhood of God and of his kingdom in which there is neither bond nor free, rich nor poor, but all are one in Christ Jesus.

The competition and strife of the world separate us, but the church unites and harmonizes us, and such unity should make us glad.

The tribes went up for a testimony unto Israel to show forth their devotion unto God. Going to church is a way of testifying that we believe in high and holy things and that, however others may do, we will serve the Lord our God.

The world needs such testimony, and we ought to be glad to give it.

The Jews also went up to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. They had some appreciation of what God had done for them and expressed their gratitude in joyous thanksgiving unto the name of the Lord.

Thankfulness is one of the primary duties and virtues of life.

We should cultivate this state of heart because we owe it unto God; because the absence of it narrows our hearts and makes us unfit and unable to receive his mercies; and because the presence of this grace enlarges our capacities and multiplies our blessings. To be ungrateful is to be selfish and surlish, but to be thankful is to be gracious and happy.

The church is the place where our gratitude is to reach its highest and holiest expression. There the mercies of God are displayed in their greatest abundance and beauty and blessing; there we see and express what great things God has done for us whereof we are glad.

3. A Throne of Judgment

A further reason why the tribes of the Jews went up to Jerusalem was that there were set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

Church and state were merged into one with the Jews.

Jerusalem was not only the city of the temple where worship was concentrated, but it was also the capital of the country whence law and justice issued. All cases civil and religious were taken up thither for final adjustment.

We have separated these functions and relegated civic cases to the civil government.

But is not the church still a court for the settlement of the highest questions? Yes, we take to the church the supreme questions of life and get them illuminated and solved in the light of heaven.

David went "to inquire in his temple," and this is still a good reason for going to church.

This again may excite the derision of the wise man of the world who thinks the church is the last place to go to learn anything. Where will one hear such dreary platitudes and solemn incomprehensibilities as in church? Who puts any premium on the opinion of a preacher? Does he know more than other men that we should go to hear him?

No, he may not know more than other men and probably not as much as some of the hearers that are listening to him. Nevertheless the church is a throne of judgment that man, even the wisest, would do well to consult and respect.

It has a great Book that has considerable reputation for wisdom and just judgment and is yet worth hearing; and it has a spirit of quietness and reverence and worship that is a necessary condition and a powerful means of finding the truth on the highest levels of life.

The world is full of prepossessions and prejudice and partisanship and passion, and as long as we are immersed in this dusty and heated atmosphere we cannot see clearly and calmly. The church is a retired quiet place where the air is cooled and cleansed and we begin to see things in their right relations and proportions and the light of God's Word and of worship falls upon the way of life.

At this throne of judgment many a confused and perplexing question grows clear and is settled.

The man that goes to church and heeds its teachings and holy influences will have juster views and clearer guidance, for there are set thrones of judgment.

4. The Peace of Jerusalem

Going to church is not all getting: it is also giving; there is something for us to do there. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."

We are to pray elsewhere and everywhere, but especially in the church.

And the minister is not to do all the praying in the church, nor the elders in the prayer meeting.

What among other things are we to pray for? "for the peace of Jerusalem." What can the church do without peace? Divided, strained and distracted, how can it mass and marshal its forces against the enemy?

Divided against itself, how can it stand?

If the body of Christ be wounded with strife, how can it show forth his love? If the household of faith be torn with dissension, how can it train and comfort its own children? A church without peace is a church without prosperity and power; a church without peace may be a public scandal and disgrace.

Pray for your church, and see that you do not disturb its peace.

Suffer long and endure all things before you do aught that will keep up an old quarrel or start a new one. Trouble not your church with your personal dislikes, or private grievances, or your domineering and dictatorial spirit, or selfish aims and ambitions.

"They shall prosper that love thee." It pays to love the church. Will this increase a man's business and pour a thicker stream of profit into his pocket? It may: for the church inculcates all the principles that lie at the foundation of true business success.

But such prosperity is of the earth and passeth away. The church promotes the prosperity of the soul. It enlarges the mind, purifies and enriches the heart, opens the windows of life towards heaven, and lays up treasures above that shall never fall in the market or fade away.

Deriving from its worship such blessings, well may we pray, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces."

5. For Companions' Sakes

David broadened out his prayer so as to include his brethren. "For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee."

He was careful to ask for others the same blessings he asked for himself.

His religion was no narrow creed and selfish worship, but it had breadth and abundance for all his brethren.

The Christian church, having been released from the Jewish husk that nourished it and yet shut it in, is to be broader still and have room in it for all the world. The peace that the church possesses is not the private privilege of those that worship within its walls, but it is a public blessing open to all.

When we disturb this peace we do harm, not only to those inside the church, but also to those outside; and when we pray for and promote this peace we are storing up blessing for our brethren and companions' sakes in the community and in the country and in far off lands.

David concludes this beautiful Psalm with the pious resolution, "For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God I will seek thy good."

6. Forsaking Not Assembling Together

The writer of the Hebrews has a fine word to say on the subject of worship. Centuries have passed since the Psalmist wrote, but this later Jewish author speaks the same language and has the same ideas.

Worship is drawing near to God and this calls for a right heart full of faith and sprinkled from an evil conscience.

We are to hold fast the confession of our hope and are to consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. And that we may do all these things we are not to forsake our assembling together, as some do, but are to exhort one another

Even in that early day there were evidently some who were careless and neglectful about going to church and were irregular in their attendance to the injury of themselves and of the church itself.

Meeting together is a great means of mutual help and efficiency in any field; in science and business and politics, as a thousand societies and meetings bear witness.

Not less is such assembling together needful in the church that we may infect one another with the holy contagion of spiritual life, or kindle ourselves at a common fire.

The church will serve us as we serve it. Neglecting it will cause our spiritual life to decline, and attending it regularly will cause it to grow strong and bear fruit.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Is the church better to-day than it was in the Psalmist's day?
2. Is anything wrong with our church services that can be improved?
3. Must we test the judgments of the church by our own judgment?
4. How can we settle divisions in the church?
5. What are the advantages of meeting together?

DATE DUE

BV 1560 .S6 1929

Snowden, James Henry, 1852-

Snowden's Sunday school lessons

6.318

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY
3 0645 1000 3667 8